

**HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE PRACTICE OF THE
PRÉLUDE NON MESURÉ AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO
RECORDING AND PERFORMANCE**

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ABSTRACT

‘A Prelude is a free composition, in which the imagination gives rein to any fancy that may present itself’ (François Couperin: *L’art de toucher Le Clavecin*, 1716)¹

The enigmatic *prélude non mesuré* was a short-lived genre characterised by rhythmically free *croches blanches* (‘flagged white notes’, rather than white quavers)² and sweeping lines and slurs that were generally notated without specific reference to rhythm or metre. Some of the lines appear to bind the tones into harmonic groups and to articulate cadential and rhythmic units, but the inherent freedom encoded in the notation presents a broad, complex interpretive scope to present-day performers. Given composers’ scant written and notational indications as to how they intended the works to be performed, this research seeks to address ways of interpreting the genre in an informed historical sense, whilst surveying current performing practices within Louis Couperin’s *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor to inform the author’s own performance.

Extant *préludes non mesurés* are contained within two manuscript sources (Parville and Bauyn), while commentary addressing performance interpretation of the notation is limited to three source documents specifically referencing the *prélude non mesuré*: Nicolas Lebègue’s preface to his *Pièces de clavessin* (1677), correspondence between Lebègue and an Englishman called Mr. William Dundass (1684), and the preface to François Couperin’s *L’art de toucher Le Clavecin* (1716). Lebègue and F. Couperin note the difficulty of creating a prelude accessible to all keyboardists. These prefaces present four stylistic aspects pertinent to the current enquiry: 1) striking chords, 2) note placement, 3) line interpretations and 4) rhythmic variety.

Given the limited scope of period performance instructions and the nebulous form of notation characteristic of the form, this dissertation considers a significant work in the genre—Louis

¹ François Couperin, *L’Art de Toucher Le Clavecin* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1933), 33.

² Shirley Thompson, “Once More into the Void: Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s ‘Croches Blanches’ Reconsidered,” *Early Music* 30, no. 1 (2002): 91, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3519281>

Couperin's *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor—in light of Lebègue and F. Couperin's commentaries on the manuscript notation.

As a means of informing contemporary performing practices, this study draws on period commentary and notational practices evident in the manuscripts, building an analytical framework that explores contemporary interpretive approaches to the *prélude non mesuré*. This structure underpins the analysis of selected recordings by a representative sample of distinguished artists from early to contemporary recordings,³ including Ruggero Gerlin, Gustav Leonhardt, Colin Tilney, Skip Sempé and Christophe Rousset. In addition, the research reflects upon the author's practical application of the analytical findings through performance. The process will apply knowledge derived from the analysis of the five contemporary recordings based on the period performance instructions to develop an informed interpretation, while providing evidence to support performative decisions, advancing keyboard performance practice by informing the stylistic awareness and creative endeavours of twenty-first-century practitioners in respect to the *prélude non mesuré*.

³ José A Bowen, "Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works," in *Rethinking Music*, Ed. Nicholas Cook and Mark Everest (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 424–51.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to explore the *prélude non mesuré* (unmeasured prelude), a genre that has fascinated modern keyboardists since its rediscovery in the mid-twentieth century. The inherent freedom presented by this genre's notation creates possibilities for a broad and complex interpretive scope. While visually beautiful, the scores generally provide a performer with only pitch and note order, omitting conventional rhythmic indications. Although the use of barlines is minimal, the sweeping lines and slurs provide a variety of intuitive and semi-intuitive directions for the performer, potentially encoding indications of articulation and duration, while appearing to bind groups of tones into harmonic groups. It is at the discretion of the performer to identify and emphasise points of harmonic and melodic interest to ensure a performance that is uniquely convincing and musically satisfying.

There are approximately fifty *préludes non mesurés* written by eight composers, all French nationals, extant within two manuscripts: the Parville manuscript discovered in Italy in 1968, and the Bauyn manuscript, which dates from approximately 1690. Louis Couperin (1626–1661) had the most extensive output of *préludes non mesurés*, writing sixteen such works. He remained faithful to the arpeggiated *croches blanches* style ('flagged white notes', rather than white quavers).⁴ L. Couperin composed exclusively in the *croches blanches* style, providing no rhythmic indications.

Only three source documents provide specific interpretative instructions for the *prélude non mesuré*: written correspondence between Nicolas Lebègue (1631–1702) and Englishman William Dundass in 1684, Lebègue's preface to his *Pièces de clavessin* in 1677, and the 1716 treatise *L'art de toucher Le Clavecin* by François Couperin (1668–1733), who was the nephew of Louis Couperin. Exploration of the secondary sources reveals a broad body of literature addressing the *prélude non mesuré*, yet no research examines and compares multiple recordings of the same work to analyse varying interpretations. Christophe Rousset also makes this observation in his album booklet, "It would be interesting to look at the history of the interpretation of unmeasured preludes, from the first recordings by Ruggero Gerlin in 1956 to the present day, and to see how the different attempts to "clarify" Louis Couperin's intentions have resulted in a fluidity that is characteristic in the first place of the visual score, or

⁴ Thompson, "Once More into the Void: Marc-Antoine Charpentier's 'Croches Blanches' Reconsidered." 91.

Notenbild".⁵ Of the limited extant research analysing recordings of the *prélude non mesuré*, the most common prelude to be analysed is the *Prélude non mesuré* in C major by L. Couperin.^{6,7} To date there are nineteen commercially released recordings of L. Couperin's *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor.

This study will compare and analyse performers' recorded interpretations spanning a fifty-year period to trace the extent to which modern interpretations of idiosyncrasies and performance style within the *prélude non mesuré* have changed. This thesis will synthesize the literature and compare recordings in order to critically inform twenty-first century harpsichordists and to establish trends in recent performances of this repertoire. This study contributes to other scholarly efforts and fields of research, and endeavours to clarify L. Couperin's intentions.

Recordings by selected keyboardists to be analysed include performances by Ruggero Gerlin (1899–1983), Gustav Leonhardt (1928–2012), Colin Tilney (b. 1933), Christophe Rousset (b. 1961), and Skip Sempé (b. 1958). Recordings were selected based on their contributions to the field in terms of performance and research, and the release dates of the recordings span a period of several decades.

As a means of creating new knowledge to inform contemporary keyboard practice, the study focuses specifically on the *Prélude non mesuré* in D Minor by L. Couperin, examining how interpretations vary in consideration of four stylistic aspects found in the source commentary:

- "Restriking chords" or the restriking of chords to sustain the sound of the harmony;
- "Note placement" or how to play each note one after the other;
- "Line interpretations" or how lines are used to indicate the length of time a note is held, while the other hand continues its movement to preserve harmonies; and
- "Rhythmic variety" or how to play in a rhythmically uninhibited style.

⁵ Rousset, Christophe. "Louis Couperin". AP006, 2010, 16.

⁶ Donna Dean Beccia-Schuster, "Interpretation of the unmeasured preludes of Louis Couperin as applied to Prelude No. 9 in C major" (MM diss, California State University, 1991).

⁷ Philip Chih-Cheng Chang, "Analytical and Performative Issues in Selected Unmeasured Preludes by Louis Couperin" (Doctor of Philosophy diss, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, 2011).

This enquiry will ascertain if over a fifty-year period, recordings have become characterised by more or less rhythmic variety, and how such variety of rhythm might be interpreted in light of commentary within the primary sources. If the hypothesis is that rhythmically neutral notation encourages a wide variety of interpretation, then it follows that these interpretations might differ in variation through the twentieth century, with rhythmic variety perhaps increasing in later recordings. Components to be investigated within the four stylistic aspects listed above include:

- a) how the lines provide performance indications and how players approach the interpretation of these lines in their performances;
- b) variances in pitch and tuning temperament used;
- c) the difference in execution of the first section of the prelude, including duration and variances in tempi;
- d) the analysis of points of harmonic and visual interest, such as the interpretation of the opening and closing chords;
- e) the inclusion of additional notes, and the difference in note placement; and
- f) the interpretation and execution of ornaments, including the use of *notes inégales* (unequal notes).⁸

One might surmise that rhythmic variety will increase in the later recordings, as the burgeoning historical performance practice movement provides performers with the stylistic knowledge required to inform interpretations.

In order to analyse variances in performance style presented by the notational practices evident within the scores, the current study compares established performers' interpretations within various recordings, which is a methodology employed by José Bowen,⁹ and Stephen Emmerson.¹⁰ Bowen discusses the concept that a composition “changes through both the creation and reception of performances—that the music goes beyond the notes on the score, embracing the act of performing the work, and that the work is also what you hear.”¹¹

⁸ Frederick Neumann, “The Notes Inégales Revisited,” *The Journal of Musicology* 6, no. 2 (1988): 146, doi:10.2307/763711

⁹ Bowen, “Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works”. 424-251.

¹⁰ Stephen Emmerson; Angela Turner, *Around a Rondo: Behind the Performance: Preparing Mozart's Rondo in A Minor, K. 511 for Performance on Fortepiano*, 2006.

¹¹ Bowen, “Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works”. 242.

Emmerson's research tracks his process of interpretation of Mozart's Rondo in A minor, K. 511 moving from a modern piano to fortepiano. His methodology includes analysing various recordings of the work, reading source documents, and receiving lessons from mentors to "contributing to the changing way I understood and interpreted this piece."¹² Nicholas Cook suggests although treatises from the period were initially considered authoritative, the written word tended to be "ambiguous at best and unintelligible at worst" and open to many varying interpretations.¹³

Investigation of such characteristics will enable this investigation to establish if the lines have greater meaning beyond the modern understanding of harmonic articulation. By adopting documented musicological practices, this investigation will survey the five recordings, examining variances in performers' improvisatory interpretations of the *prélude non mesuré*. To develop a useful understanding of the limited notation governing both melody and rhythm within the *prélude non mesuré*, it is expedient for twenty-first century musicians to examine such idiosyncrasies through recordings and the act of performance. Taking a methodology adopted by Emmerson,¹⁴ I will then use the results of the analysis to inform my own presentation of the *Prélude non Mesuré* in D minor. It is anticipated that the knowledge gained through the detailed analysis of significant recordings in this thesis will provide present-day keyboardists with new knowledge to facilitate their exploration of the *prélude non mesuré* genre through the pursuit of performance informed by historical research.

¹² Emmerson, *Around a Rondo: Preparing Mozart's Rondo in A Minor for Performance on Fortepiano*.

¹³ Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 27.

¹⁴ Emmerson, *Around a Rondo: Preparing Mozart's Rondo in A Minor for Performance on Fortepiano*.

CHAPTER ONE – HISTORICAL SOURCES AND CURRENT LITERATURE

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This chapter contains an overview of the *préludes non mesurés* (unmeasured preludes) and the composers who contributed to this genre. It will consider the period when the genre came to prominence and discuss its origins, presenting an analysis of the harmonic structure and the influences deriving from lute manuscripts. It will also explore the compositional styles of composers as evidenced by different notational possibilities, the use of ornaments and accidentals within the scores, as well as the possible influence of eighteenth-century mechanical instruments. Finally, this chapter will introduce the written literature available on the *prélude non mesuré*, including primary and secondary sources. François Couperin and Nicolas Lebègue were the only contemporaneous contributors to the limited extant instructional literature on performance of the *prélude non mesuré*. More recent research has been undertaken by practitioners including Colin Tilney, Alan Curtis and Bruce Gustafson. Contemporary literature provides a wider context, including discussions regarding meter and notation, rhythmic interpretation, ornamentation, the use of lines and how these lines might relate to harpsichord resonance, as well as the use of accidentals. Practitioners, most notably Curtis¹⁵ and Tilney,¹⁶ contributed to the field by publishing modern editions, bringing this music to generations of harpsichordists.

Oxford Music Online defines the term *prélude non mesuré* as ‘a term usually reserved for a body of seventeenth-century harpsichord preludes that are written without orthodox indications of rhythm and metre’¹⁷ and is predominantly associated with lute and harpsichord music of the seventeenth century. The same resource defines the term prelude as ‘a term of varied application that, in its original usage, indicated a piece that preceded other music whose tonic, mode, or key it was designed to introduce; was instrumental (the roots *ludus* and *Spiel* mean ‘played’ as opposed to ‘sung’); and was improvised (hence the French *préluder* and the German *präludieren*, meaning ‘to improvise’).¹⁸ Improvised keyboard preludes originated from lute preludes—the earliest examples dating from approximately 1630—and were used as a way to test an instrument before commencing playing.

¹⁵ Alan Curtis, *Pièces de Clavecin* (Paris: Heugel & Cie., 1970).

¹⁶ Colin Tilney, *The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord, France, 1660 - 1720* (London: New York: Schott & Co. Ltd, 1991).

¹⁷ Davitt Moroney, “Prélude Non Mesuré,” *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 22 March 2014.

¹⁸ Howard Ferguson, “Prelude,” *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 22 March 2014.

In 1684 Lebègue stated: “A prelude is nothing more than a preparation for playing the pieces in a certain key”,¹⁹ a concise observation, which might suggest that the act of performing in this improvised style was setting the scene, preparing the listener for the harmonic anchor. Although various methods of notating this kind of music were developed, unmeasured notation became obsolete by the time F. Couperin published his book of preludes *L'art de toucher le clavecin* in 1716. F. Couperin felt that performers had lost the art of realising the unmeasured notation and that the notation itself had lost its essence: its deliberate and beguiling ambiguity. However, given the continued use of the notation, and the differing approaches that this method of writing encouraged, it could be assumed that performers of the time were able to realise the *croches blanches* style.

COMPOSERS AND THEIR OUTPUT

The exact birth date of Louis Couperin is undocumented. However, if Titon du Tillet’s claim is correct that L. Couperin died at the age of thirty-five, then the latter was born in 1626 in Chaumes-en-Brie, near Paris. Although L. Couperin is known for his chamber, organ, and sacred works, it is his sixteen *préludes non mesurés* that have intrigued scholars around the world. L. Couperin developed the highest number of *préludes non mesurés* available exclusively in manuscript sources utilised by professional players or composers. His notational approach provides the performer with the least amount of interpretative direction, with the onus falling on the keyboardist to consider a performance that moves beyond the harmonic structure to ultimately execute the work in an improvisatory style or in the manner of a composer. The availability of printed keyboard music saw a gradual increase in manuscripts from around 1670, providing composers the opportunity to experiment with different formats and notations, while providing a richer understanding of the *préludes non mesurés* interpretation, while removing the necessity for the presence of a teacher.

Lebègue was one of the first composers to experiment with *préludes non mesurés*, as seen in his books of suites published in 1677 and 1687.²⁰ Curtis notes “that Lebègue’s preludes were unpopular with the performing public, either because of his particular style of notating them, or, more likely, because of the difficulties involved in the interpretation of these pieces, even

¹⁹ Bruce Gustafson, “The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord: France 1660-1720 by Colin Tilney,” *Music & Letters* 74, no. 4 (1993): 648, doi:10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004

²⁰ Only the first book contained his five *préludes non mesurés*.

for the 17th century performer.”²¹ However, as Lebègue published two books containing five *préludes non mesurés*, his preludes cannot have been greatly unpopular with the public.²² Lebègue did acknowledge in the preface to *Les Pièces de Clavessin* the “great difficulty in rendering this method of preluding intelligible enough for everyone”. Lebègue’s notational style varies from that of L. Couperin. The former employs standard note values rather than semibreves, but excludes a time signature. He irregularly uses diagonal barlines in all but the first prelude.

Jean-Henri d’Anglebert’s (1629–1691) self-published book²³ of 1689 contained three *préludes non mesurés*, with two versions provided.²⁴ One version was notated in the *croches blanches* style²⁵ of L. Couperin without the use of barlines. The second version provided greater rhythmic guidance through standard note values mixed with semibreve notation, the more regular use of barlines, and the inclusion of more ornaments aligned with an elaborate ornament chart. There is a fourth *Prélude non mesuré* in C major, written in the *croches blanches* style, which lacks a second rhythmical version. By providing two versions d’Anglebert recognised the *préludes non mesurés* may have been difficult to interpret, and the more rhythmical versions clarify musical ideas for players. Moroney notes there are three anonymous preludes contained in the Parville source that are not found in Bauyn—these could also be attributed to d’Anglebert, as they have the characteristics of d’Anglebert’s writing.

Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre (1665–1729) is another composer who contributed significantly to the genre, with four *préludes non mesurés* in her 1687 publication *Pièces de clavessin*. Jacquet de la Guerre was the only other composer to contribute a measured middle section between two unmeasured sections. Like L. Couperin, the measured sections were the only place she used barlines. However, the unmeasured sections include lines to indicate when two notes should be played together.

²¹ Alan Curtis, “Unmeasured Preludes in French Baroque Instrumental Music.” (B.Mus diss, University of Illinois, 1956) 84.

²² Richard Troeger, “The French Unmeasured Harpsichord Prelude,” *Early Keyboard Journal*, 1992, 92.

²³ D’Anglebert, *Pièces de Clavessin Avec La Manière de Les Jouer: Diverses Chaconnes, Ouvertures et Autres Airs de M. de Lully Mis Sur Cet Instrument*.

²⁴ Curtis, “Unmeasured Preludes in French Baroque Instrumental Music,” 98.

²⁵ Thompson, “Once More into the Void: Marc-Antoine Charpentier’s ‘Croches Blanches’ Reconsidered,” 91.

Of the remaining *préludes non mesurés*, Louis Nicolas Clérambault (1676–1749) wrote two, Louis Marchand (1669–1732) composed one and Gaspard Le Roux (c.1660–1707) produced four. While Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764) contributed only one prelude, it is the only prelude to include a repeat of an unmeasured section, before commencing a measured passage. Nicolas Siret (1663–1754) composed one prelude without barlines. Roux continued L. Couperin's semibreve style of writing in his four pieces, although he did not replicate L. Couperin's style of the vertical lines. He did include figures beneath the bass line, guiding the performer as to the overall harmonic structure of the piece.

There remain twenty-three anonymous preludes that exist within manuscript sources. Tilney notes that these pieces offer examples of simple improvisation that players should not find too difficult to interpret.²⁶ By the time of François Couperin's publication *L'Art de toucher le Clavecin*, which included eight fully measured preludes, some publishers had taken to removing the unmeasured format from reprinted volumes. It is unclear if this was due to the difficulty of interpreting the *préludes non mesurés*, or if it was a result of the inconvenience in engraving the compositions.

There existed no specific "composer" and "performer" roles in the seventeenth century, and it was not until the later eighteenth century that these roles started to be conceptually separated. Beghin notes that "the ideal of the composer-performer is ubiquitous in almost all eighteenth-century treatises on performance, especially those on playing the keyboard, where the listener may be easily led to assume that the player also is the composer."²⁷ It is possible that the increasing divergence of the two roles throughout the eighteenth century became a factor influencing the decline of the *prélude non mesuré* genre. This may be due to the responsibility being placed on the composer to identify and emphasise points of harmonic and melodic interest with the use of lines and rhythmic indications, therefore removing the need for the performer to improvise. Although musicians from the seventeenth century could not resist the temptation to ornament and adapt the score,²⁸ a present-day practitioner might consider playing only what was written.

²⁶ Tilney, *The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord, France, 1660 - 1720*. vol. 3, 1.

²⁷ Tom Beghin, *The Virtual Haydn: Paradox of a Twenty-First-Century Keyboardist* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 60.

²⁸ John Spitzer and Neal Zaslaw, "Improvised Ornamentation in Eighteenth-Century Orchestras," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 39, no. 3 (1986): 533 doi:10.2307/831627

INFLUENCE OF THE LUTE

There are many similarities between the lute and the harpsichord – for example, both are plucked instruments. Extant treatises refer to the role of both instruments in accompaniment: a large number of lute pieces were transcribed for keyboard instruments, allowing harpsichordists to adopt styles including dance forms. Both instruments use the arpeggiated style of playing developed in the seventeenth century known today as *style luthé* or *brisé* (broken style: playing parts successively rather than simultaneously).²⁹

Buch notes the seventeenth-century word *brisé* referred to a type of ornament. During his research, Buch was unable to find evidence to suggest that the term *style brisé* had been used prior to the twentieth century.³⁰ *Style brisé* is considered an improvisatory style based on harmonic and contrapuntal formulae and without clear harmonic structure, whereby the performer does not play notes simultaneously, but rather in an arpeggiated style.³¹ As with keyboard preludes, the *préludes non mesurés* for lute often contain few rhythmic indications and composers provided rhythms above the tablature for other genres, (see Fig. 1). In the first bar, the straight line above and below the first set of ‘g’ represents a crochet beat.³² Where a note lacks rhythmic indication, the composer intended the next note to be the same value (for example the following ‘f’ would also be a crochet (see red arrow)). Figure 1 presents some features, as will be noted in other examples, such as sweeping lines to convey the length a note is to be held, for example bars 7 and 9 (see blue arrows). There is also the use of vertical alignment to indicate when two notes should be played together, such as bars 1 and 2.



Figure 1: Denis Gaultier: *Livres de tablature des Pièces de Luth – Courante*

(Source: Gaultier, n.d. [1680], p.72)

²⁹ David Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in 17th-Century France* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1987), 33.

³⁰ David J Buch, “‘Style Brise, Style Luthe,’ and the ‘Choses Luthees,’” *The Musical Quarterly* 71, no. 1 (1985): 52, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/948172>.

³¹ Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in 17th-Century France*, 33.

³² For the purposes of this thesis, scientific pitch notation is used to identify note names. The sequence of octaves for C is as follows: (C4 equals middle C) C0, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, C9.

COMPOSITIONAL STYLE OF THE *PRÉLUDE NON MESURÉ*

Two styles are associated with the *prélude non mesuré*: the toccata style (Italian *toccare*: to touch, referencing the testing of a keyboard), and the *tombeaux* style. Four of L. Couperin's *préludes non mesurés* are identified as toccatas, with two free outer sections and a measured fugal central section (numbers 1, 3, 6 and 12). Prelude No 6 '*Prélude de Monsieur Couperin à l'imitation de Monsieur Froberger*' is derived from Johann Jakob Froberger's (1616–1667) first organ toccata, showing a connection between the two forms. The *tombeaux* style was for pieces written in memory of deceased teachers, patrons and friends. Moroney notes "the tombeau-allemande style, in measured notations, is characterised by a slow tempo and a freedom of rhythm". Three of L. Couperin's *préludes non mesurés* (numbers 2, 4 and 13) are written in this tombeau-allemande style.³³

L. Couperin and Le Roux use *croches blanches* to indicate pitch, while utilising lines to designate notes to be sustained, or to show harmonic structure, reflecting the influence of French lutenists (see Fig. 2).³⁴

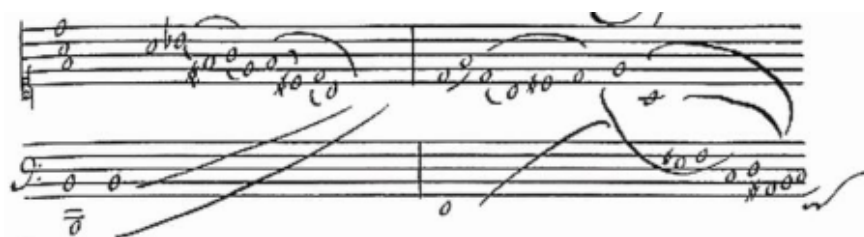


Figure 2: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor (opening chord)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.1)

The second style is exemplified in Jacquet de la Guerre's four *préludes* of 1687 and d'Anglebert's *préludes* published two years later. In such works, sustained harmonic notes are indicated by semibreves, and passing notes are shown with either quaver or semiquaver note values, although the note value is not to be taken literally. In contrast to Jacquet de la Guerre, d'Anglebert occasionally tied a quaver to a semibreve where notes were harmonically significant. D'Anglebert concludes a section of harmonic importance with a barline (see Fig. 3):

³³ Davitt Moroney, "Prélude non mesuré." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed 22 March 2014.

³⁴ Troeger, "The French Unmeasured Harpsichord Prelude.", 90.



Figure 3: Jean-Henri d'Anglebert: *Pièces de Clavecin, Prélude non mesuré*: F major (opening passage)
(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.83)

The third style used by Lebègue, Clérambault, Marchand, Rameau and Siret employs rhythmic note values from the breve to the demisemiquaver. It retains a level of improvisation as necessary, while demonstrating characteristics of a measured composition. Troeger notes “that much multiple-value prelude notation shows passages whose rhythmic and even metric coherence makes them essentially measured; and that many “unmeasured” passages in single- or dual-value notation fall into regular patterns that strongly suggest explicit rhythmic/metric treatment”.³⁵ This can be seen in the solitary example by Rameau (see Fig. 4). The first line begins with a *croches blanches* style showing quavers before intervals to be articulated (see red arrow). The melody proceeds to three descending passages that could be executed in a measured style (see blue arrows):



Figure 4: Jean-Philippe Rameau: *Prélude non mesuré*: A minor (extract)
(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.96)

³⁵ Ibid., 91.

Reasons why composers provided this additional rhythmic information to a style intended to be improvisatory is worth noting. It may imply they felt the prevailing style of notation did not adequately provide the information required for performers to interpret the *prélude non mesuré* in the appropriate manner. It may also suggest a lack of knowledge as to how to interpret the *préludes non mesurés*. The absence of barlines and coherent metrical symmetry may also simply emphasise to the player that the piece should be performed without too rigid an application of tactus.

USE OF ORNAMENTS WITHIN THE *PRÉLUDES NON MESURÉS*

L. Couperin was the only composer to use both shorthand ornament symbols, and to fully realise ornaments in large-note notation within the body of the music. The two most common ornament symbols used by L. Couperin were the *tremblement* (trill) and the *pincé* (mordent).³⁶ Given the performance conventions of the day, it might be assumed that L. Couperin's written out ornaments were meant to be executed with the exact number of notes notated. Further hypothesis suggests they were simply longhand indications of ornaments that were often denoted by symbols, and therefore intended to be realised more freely to replicate the idea of the *préludes non mesurés*. One could also say the symbol lacked specificity, as ornament symbols were interpreted differently depending on prevailing performance conventions in different countries. By choosing to write out the ornament without abbreviations or symbols, L. Couperin is ensuring a performer has the correct information for the execution of the ornament, as per his ornamentation style, removing one factor that may contribute to a performers uncertainty in their interpretation of this free genre. Cook, however, suggests it is unclear as to the exact purpose of written out ornamentation, as it could have been a guide for beginners, a guide for good practice or the pursuit to reproduce what a composer intended.³⁷ It is for the performer to decide if they wish to execute written out *tremblements* exactly as written, or if they simply use it as example, in order to maintain the improvisatory nature of the performance. The nature of the *préludes non mesurés* remove the worry about rhythm, giving a beginner the more ability to concentrate of other elements, such as written out ornaments. By providing a written out ornament, the beginner is provided with a realisation before being introduced to the ornament symbols.

³⁶ The ornament table referenced in this thesis is from a contemporary of L. Couperin: d'Anglebert's *Pièces de clavecin* publication, 1689. See Appendix.

³⁷ Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 27.

The use of ornaments indicated in this manner may also have been influenced by mechanical instruments. Automatic instruments from the eighteenth century provide the modern scholar more context than treatises, as every ornament needed to be precisely pinned on the surface of a barrel for the automatic instrument to play the composition correctly. The barrel showed how ornaments were interpreted in real musical settings when compared with the ornament tables provided by composers.³⁸

In 1775 Marie Dominique Joseph Engramelle (1727–1805) wrote a treatise called *La tonotechnie ou L'art de noter des cylindres*. Unlike François Couperin and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714–1788) who wrote about how to interpret and perform ornaments, Engramelle's intended audience were the arrangers of mechanical organ music. Engramelle provided a description of the processes within ornamentation, creating a shorthand in preparation for the pinning of a score. As time (horizontal) progresses evenly, pitches are shown on the score accordingly in configurations (vertical). Visually the two styles appear similar, and the *prélude non mesuré* could conceptually be the prototype for the pinned scripts of later barrel organs in the eighteenth century. This style of composing gave the composer/performer freedom from the constrictions of metre, and resulted in a visually satisfying way to convey musical intentions. For example, the composer could write out an arpeggio in a wholly realised form (see Fig. 5).

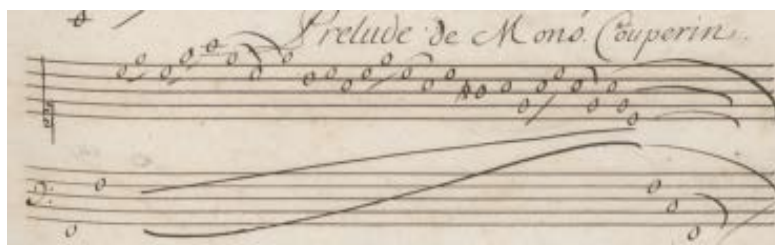


Figure 5: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: A minor (opening passage)
(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.17)

Musicians of L. Couperin's time were expected to embellish.³⁹ Treatise authors wrote against the culture of pervasive embellishment, when addressing eighteenth-century orchestral practices. Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773) explained this widespread practice of improvised ornamentation referring to the influence of the solo and lower-class playing styles. "Musicians are accustomed to ornamenting their parts when they play concertos or sonatas; they persist in the practice when they play in orchestras."⁴⁰ Musicians who accompanied dance music in informal social settings would continue their habit of including additional ornaments

³⁸ David Fuller, "An Introduction to Automatic Instruments," *Early Music* 11, no. 2 (1983): 166, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3137828>

³⁹ Spitzer and Zaslaw, "Improvised Ornamentation in Eighteenth-Century Orchestras.", 533.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 541.

when they were in the more refined orchestral setting.⁴¹ When joining in the argument that soloists make poor ripienists, Leopold Mozart (1719–1787) felt that few soloists could read music proficiently, due to their habits of including additional notes and ornaments.⁴² This statement supports the view that composers wanted musicians to play the score exactly as written and saw the rise of the performer as someone who had a completely different role from the composer. Zaslaw notes these statements imply that improvised ornamentation infiltrated orchestral playing from virtuoso, soloistic, literate practice, along with the non-notated tavern practice. The act of improvising was considered by many in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to be a core competency expected of any court and church musician. One need only consider the famous improvisational skills of J.S Bach, Buxtehude and d’Anglebert.

Within L. Couperin’s *préludes non mesurés* there are clear examples of four specific types of ornament: *tremblement*, *coulés*, *port de voix* (see Fig. 6) and *pincé*, which are notated and expressed in an idiosyncratic fashion. One can find examples of these ornaments within the *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor (see Fig. 6 – 12 below). Ornaments were used to offer the performer a guide as to which notes to accentuate as they were generally accompanied by strong beats. These beats also correlated with harmonic change, which would also result in an accent at the start of a group of beats.⁴³

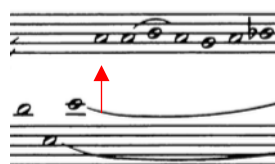


Figure 6: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor: Example of *port de voix* (7R9-11 – red arrow identifies 7R9)
(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 2 Modern Transcriptions, p.2)

As a means of referencing a specific note, Tilney uses the following method: the first number refers to the bar number; ‘L’ refers to the left hand, ‘R’ to the right hand; the final number references the note’s placement.⁴⁴ The *tremblement* figure (Fig. 7: 4L1-14) creates parallel fifths,

⁴¹ Ibid., 541.

⁴² Ibid., 544.

⁴³ Richard Troeger, “Metre in Unmeasured Preludes,” *Early Music* 11, no. 3 (1983): 343, <http://www.jstor.org.virtual.anu.edu.au/stable/3138021>

⁴⁴ In *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor, 1L1 references to the note in bar 1 that is the first left hand note (D3/D2); 10R6 refers to bar 10, and the sixth note in the right hand (C4). 1R3-6 refers to the first bar, right hand notes – third until the sixth (B^b4 – F[#]4 – G4 – E4). Multiple notes that are vertically aligned are considered as one within this system. Given the simplicity of such a referencing system, the present study employs a similar approach.

albeit alternating in a diminished fifth, therefore technically acceptable. Given the diminished interval created, L. Couperin may have written this ornament in large-note notation in order to confirm his intentions, and to ensure a performer didn't amend the F[#] to an F natural. Examples demonstrate two parts built around a third part with the D.⁴⁵

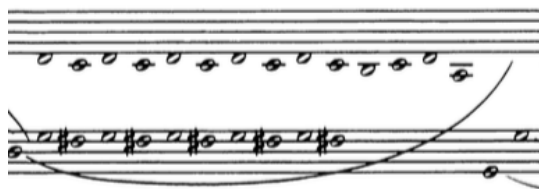


Figure 7: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor: Example of a *tremblement* (4R1-14)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 2 Modern Transcriptions, p.2)

L. Couperin also fully writes a *cadence* beginning from below, rather than using the symbol (5L1-15), as suggested in d'Anglebert's ornament table (Appendix 1). There is no clear indication as to why he chose to thoroughly notate this ornament. Perhaps he was visually balancing the activity between the two hands, and by writing out the full ornament, the left hand is an equal to the right hand. It also suggests the right hand is to linger on the previous notes of harmonic importance, rather than rushing into the ascending scale passage.

The literature presents three examples of the written out *coulé*, each with a line connecting the first to the third note (see Fig. 8 – red arrows). As the second note is not also attached to a line, it appears to be a passing note between the two outer notes. L. Couperin may have chosen to write these ornaments out in full, in order to avoid writing the first and third note as a chord, and to retain the visual flow of the music.



Figure 8: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor: Example of a *coulé* (6R22-24 and 7R6-8)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 2 Modern Transcriptions, p.2)

⁴⁵ William Drabkin, "Consecutive Fifths, Consecutive Octaves," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed January 31, 2017.

The only example of a *pincé* illustrated with a sign is in the left hand, rather than written out fully. This is likely due to the fact that the preceding note in the right hand (3R3) is the same F#3 and L. Couperin may have used the symbol to avoid confusion (Fig. 9).

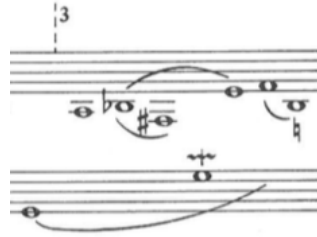


Figure 9: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor: example of a *pincé*
(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 2 Modern Transcriptions, p.2)

In addition to the ornaments identified by Tilney that utilise a sign (Fig 10), two examples of written out *pincé* are found in the first section of the *Prélude non mesuré* (Figs. 11 and 12). Although both examples are not part of a rising melodic passage, they are at the peak of each short musical statement. It is not possible for these written out ornaments to be turns, as they are not preceded by a *tremblement*. Both examples preface the downward falling melody pattern found at the beginning of the piece (1R3-7). In writing out this ornament rather than using a symbol, L. Couperin is supplying the third of each chord. In the first example (4R16-18), this helps the listener to identify the harmonic progression, where he moves from a G major to a G minor chord. The notes do not have any lines attached to suggest that this passage should be accentuated. In the second example, the ornament provides variety to the melodic passage, as L. Couperin uses the same opening figure (1R3-7: see Fig. 14) six times within a two-bar section. Again, this example does not have any lines attached to indicate that the notes should be sustained at all. This suggests that these examples are written out ornaments, and not of harmonic importance that need to continue to sound. In both examples, a musician could execute these notes as up-beats, playing them quickly before leaning on the following note, which has harmonic importance.

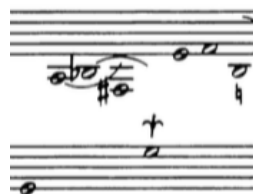


Figure 10: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor: Example of a *pincé* (3L1)
(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 2 Modern Transcriptions, p.2)

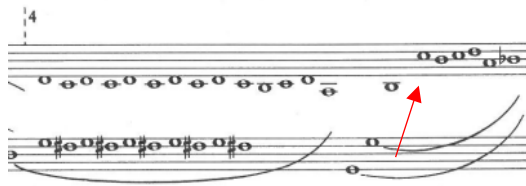


Figure 11: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor Example of a fully notated *pincé* (4R16-18 – red arrow identifies 4R16)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 2 Modern Transcriptions, p.2)



Figure 12: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor Example of a fully notated *pincé* (6R15-17 – red arrow identifies 6R15)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 2 Modern Transcriptions, p.2)

ACCIDENTALS

By the end of the seventeenth century, it was standard practice for barlines to indicate the termination of accidentals.⁴⁶ However, as there are no regularly occurring barlines within many of *préludes non mesurés*, composers returned to the earlier seventeenth-century standard practice of re-notating an accidental as required, as noted in Lebègue's second prelude, third stanza, and Jacquet de la Guerre's first prelude, third stanza (see Fig. 13, red arrows):



Figure 13: Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor (extract)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.72)

⁴⁶ David Hiley, "Accidental," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, 2001, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/00103>

PRIMARY SOURCES CONTAINING *PRÉLUDES NON MESURÉS*

As noted earlier, there are approximately fifty extant *préludes non mesurés*, with the majority contained within two manuscripts together considered to be the most valuable sources of French keyboard music. The Bauyn and the Parville manuscripts contain most known keyboard pieces by L. Couperin, amongst other French composers. There is also a significant privately owned manuscript containing works by L. Couperin, Chambonnières and d'Anglebert. This document helps to clarify the derivation of works, as it contains all of L. Couperin's organ works (with date and location noted). However, access to the manuscript is strictly controlled, and to date the full manuscript has not been published. Of these three manuscripts, the Bauyn is considered to be the more reliable of editions, although the Parville does provide alternative suggestions that are also considered credible.⁴⁷

The Parville manuscript was discovered in Italy in 1968, and dates from approximately 1670. The Bauyn manuscript dates from approximately 1690 and is said to have belonged to the Bauyn d'Angervilliers family.⁴⁸ The Bauyn manuscript was brought to modern attention by Guittard in 1901 in his study on Chambonnières's music. Dating of the document has since been revised over the years and still no accurate date has been assigned. Research by the likes of Moroney (2014), Gustafson (1977) and Fuller (n.d.) have led researchers to believe that the much of the Bauyn manuscript's contents were copied into the source two or three decades after the works were composed.⁴⁹ It contains 149 compositions, of which fifty-six are attributable to (Mr) Coupprain, Couprain, Couprin and Couperin (various misspellings of the Couperin surname). Couperin is never referred to by his full name and it is not clear which Couperin wrote the works. Ten *préludes non mesurés* are common to both Parville and Bauyn. Bauyn contains four that are not in Parville, and the Parville contains two not found in Bauyn.

The Bauyn manuscript consists of 345 works and provides primary sources for half of L. Couperin's harpsichord compositions. The manuscript collection is broken into three parts. The first section contains Chambonnières (118 pieces, introduction of manuscript), the second section L. Couperin (122 pieces) and the third section contains pieces by other composers such

⁴⁷ David Chung, "The Port de Voix in Louis Couperin's Unmeasured Preludes: A Study of Types, Functions and Interpretation," in *Performer's Voices across Centuries and Cultures* (London: Imperial College Press, 2012), 59–84, 59.

⁴⁸ Manuscrit Bauyn, *Pièces de Clavecin c.1660*, ed. Minkoff Reprint, Res. Vm7 6 (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1977), 2.

⁴⁹ David Chung, "The Bauyn Manuscript: Harpsichord Music from the Seventeenth Century," *Music Library Association* 72 (1) (2015): 216–21.

as d'Anglebert, Lebègue and Gilles Hardel (c. 1611—d. unknown), as well as transcriptions of works by lutenists such as Denis Gautier (1597 or 1603—1672), René Mesangeau (late sixteenth century–1638) and others. There are also works by two composers outside France: Giralamo Frescobaldi (1583—1643) and Froberger. Frescobaldi taught Froberger, and Frescobaldi's influence on the toccata style was passed from Froberger to L. Couperin.⁵⁰ Although many of the composers were French, the widespread distribution of these manuscripts suggests the style extended beyond France into Italy, Germany and Scotland.

EDITIONS ADDRESSING THE *PRÉLUDE NON MESURÉ*

Although this research is not specifically concerned with modern editions, it is worth addressing that notable performers, such as Moroney, Curtis and Tilney have released their own interpretations, based on their interpretation of the Bauyn and Parville manuscripts (see Appendix 2). In total there have been seven editions:

EDITION	DATE	SOURCE(S)
Anne Chapelin-Dubar	2009	Collation, readings from Bauyn preferred
Glen Wilson	2003	Collation, readings from Bauyn preferred
Colin Tilney	1991	Collation, readings from Bauyn preferred
Davitt Moroney	1985	Collation, readings from Bauyn preferred
Alan Curtis	1970	Collation, readings from Parville preferred
Thurston Dart	1959	Bauyn
Paul Brunold	1936	Bauyn

Table 1: Represents the editions of Louis Couperin's unmeasured preludes, as released by Chung.⁵¹

Chung notes a discrepancy between the two manuscripts in Louis Couperin's D minor *Prélude non mesuré*. Using Tilney's edition (see Appendix 2), note 2L1 (see footnote 44) is written as A2, as per the Parville edition. However, the Bauyn manuscript shows this note as F2. Of the five editions to utilise both editions Curtis, Wilson and Chapelin-Dubar choose the Bauyn F2, and

⁵⁰ Ledbetter, *Harpsichord and Lute Music in 17th-Century France*, 90.

⁵¹ Chung, "The Port de Voix in Louis Couperin's Unmeasured Preludes: A Study of Types, Functions and Interpretation.", 72.

Moroney and Tilney using the A2. For this research the Tilney edition has been chosen, due to availability and ease of use.

SOURCE DOCUMENTS ADDRESSING THE *PRÉLUDE NON MESURÉ*

There are three primary sources that specifically reference performance practices within the *prélude non mesuré*, two of which are written by Lebègue. There is correspondence from 1684 between Lebègue and an Englishman William Dundass, in addition to Lebègue's preface to the *Pièces de clavessin* (1677) and François Couperin's *L'art de toucher Le Clavecin* (1716).

The first reference is a letter that Lebègue sent responding to an enquiry by Dundass. Although the original letter is no longer available, a copy of Lebègue's response is transcribed on the front of a 1677 copy with a polite closing note, informing Dundass that Lebègue would find "great satisfaction"⁵² in making his acquaintance, should clarification be required. This correspondence demonstrates Lebègue's willingness to meet and discuss the works with fellow musicians.

The page is laid out in two columns with Lebègue's French response on the left and the translation into "rather garbled English"⁵³ on the right, along with an English translation of Lebègue's explanation. Presumably the writer of the columns was the translator, as a monetary fee paid to Dundass on July 3, 1684 is written in the same handwriting. The first point reiterates the idea that the preludes were preparatory material preceding other pieces in the same key. For this reason, Lebègue notes (from the English translation) that:

I was not at the pains to separate them by measure, as the pieces are, because they have nothing of determined in them'. He also provides the advice 'Now to give some light for regular touching of ye preludes ye must know first, that ye must touch all the nottes the on[e] after the other, that is to say, to touch those first w[hi]ch appeared first to the sight, whither they be of the line of the base or of that of the treble, and the other afterward.'⁵⁴

In his second point, Lebègue writes:

2°, Le petit cercle qui prend de la notte d'en bas et qui contenüe jusqu'a celle d'en haut, signifie qu'il faut tenir toutes les nottes que ledit cercle entoure sans en quitter pas une apres que vous les avez touché, et cela pour conserver l'harmonie.

⁵² Bruce Gustafson, "A Letter from Mr Lebegue Concerning His Preludes," *"Recherches" sur La Musique Française Classique XVII*, 1977, 10.

⁵³ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 9-10.

2°, The litle circle which begins at the note below, and continoues to a notte above (in the same line) doth signifie that ye must hold out all the nottes enclosed by that cercle without quyting any of them after ye haue touched them and that for preserving of the harmonie.^{55 56}

The third point concerns the *tenües*:

Quand apres un grand accord vous troverez des tenües ou cercles, et qu'une autre partie roulera et se promenera, C'est a dire qu'il faut toujours tenir le dit accord pendant cela.

When after a great accord you find bindings or circles, and that the other part glydes or walketh on, the meaning is that you always hold out that accord during the tyme the other part is moving forward.⁵⁷

The second reference, the preface to Lebègue's *Pièces de clavessin*, states (as translated by Troeger):

J'ay taché de mettre les préludes avec toute la facilité possible tant pour la Conformité que pour le toucher du Clavecin, dont la maniere est de Separer et de rebattre plus-tost les accords que de les tenir comme a l'Orgue si quelque chose s'y rencontre vn peu difficile et obscure le prie messrs. les intelligents de vouloir suppleer aux deffaux en considerant la grande difficulté de render cette metode de Preluder assé intelligible a vn chacun.

I have tried to present the preludes with all possible simplicity, as much for [notational] consistency as for harpsichord technique, whose style is to separate [i.e., arpeggiated] and immediately restrike chords rather than to hold them as on the organ; if anything is found to be a little difficult and obscure I ask the intelligent [readers] to be willing to supply what is lacking, considering the great difficulty of rendering this method of preluding intelligible enough for everyone.⁵⁸

Besides demonstrating how widespread Lebègue's works were disseminated, there is no additional information contained within the correspondence.

The third reference by François Couperin notes his more structured notational style was to make the interpretation of the preludes easier for the general public, while maintaining an

⁵⁵ In this context the term 'cercle/circle' implies the phrasing lines.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 9-10.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 9-10.

⁵⁸ Troeger, "The French Unmeasured Harpsichord Prelude," 92.

unmeasured style. It is of interest that F. Couperin references teaching and learning the *prélude non mesuré*, and not the act of performing them:

Quoy que ces Préludes soient écrits mesurés, il y a cependant un goût d'usage qu'il faut suivre. Je m'explique. Prélude, est une composition libre, ou l'imagination se livre à tout ce qui se présente à elle. Mais, comme il est assés rare de trouver des genies capables de produire dans l'instant; il faut que ceux qui auront recours à Préludes-réglés, les jouent d'une maniere aisée sans trop s'attacher à la précision des mouvemens; à moins que je ne l'aye marqué exprés par le mot de, Mesuré: Ainsi, on peut hazarder de dire, que dans deaucoup de choses, la Musique (par comparaison à la Poésis) a sa prose, et ses Vers.

Une des raisons pour laquelle j'ai mesuré ces Préludes, ça, été la facilité qu'on trouvera, soit à les enseigner; ou à les apprendre.

Although these Preludes are written in measured time, there is, nevertheless, a style, dictated by custom, which must be observed. I will explain what I mean. A Prelude is a free composition, in which the imagination gives rein to any fancy that may present itself. But as it is rather rare to find geniuses capable of production on the spur of the moment, those who have recourse to these non-improvised Preludes should play them in a free, easy style, not sticking too closely to the exact time, unless I have expressly indicated this by the word Mesuré (Measured time): Thus one may venture to say that in many things, Music (as compared with Poetry) has its prose, and its verse.

One of the reasons why I have written these Preludes in measured time was to make them easier, as will be found to be the case, whether in teaching them, or in learning them.⁵⁹

Tilney identifies the final sentence as the epitaph for *préludes non mesurés* in general.⁶⁰

Tsuruta notes two additional references, although these are not specific to the *préludes non mesurés*. St Lambert addresses the use of slurs within the context of preludes in his *Les principes de clavecin*.⁶¹ The second reference is C.P.E Bach's *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, in which the author discusses the metre of unmeasured free fantasias and the act of improvising, noting that a performer requires a natural talent, especially in regard to the ability to improvise.⁶²

⁵⁹ François Couperin, *L'Art de Toucher Le Clavecin* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1933), 33.

⁶⁰ Tilney, *The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord, France, 1660 - 1720*. vol. 3, 4.

⁶¹ Saint-Lambert, *Les Principes Du Clavecin*.

⁶² C.P. E. Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* (Lowe & Brydone Printers Ltd, 1949), 430.

THEMES EMERGING WITHIN SECONDARY SOURCES ADDRESSING THE *PRÉLUDE NON MESURÉ*

Research analysing the performance traditions of *préludes non mesurés* is limited. Various themes have emerged through scholarship of the last fifty years. The first modern scholar to investigate the *prélude non mesuré* in French Baroque instrumental music was Alan Curtis.⁶³ His work was not concerned with how to perform the *prélude non mesuré*, but with the presentation of an historical study of the form. Moroney's research investigates performance of the *prélude non mesuré*,⁶⁴ as well as contributing to the topic for Grove Music Online.⁶⁵ Gustafson⁶⁶ is the only scholar to address the source documentation by Lebègue in 1677. Troeger's research addresses the metre in *prélude non mesuré*⁶⁷ and the notation and performance of the *prélude non mesuré*.⁶⁸ Tilney's publication⁶⁹ contains both facsimiles and his transcriptions of all existing *préludes non mesurés*, with a commentary on interpretation.

In the same year as Tilney's publication, Beccia-Schuster examined the interpretation of the *Prélude non mesuré* in C major,⁷⁰ comparing the style of tombeaux, allemandes and toccatas by other early Baroque composers such as Froberger. Her conclusions suggest that in-depth analysis of these extemporised works offer interpretive understandings of L. Couperin's *préludes non mesurés*. More recently, Chang applied Schenkerian analysis to *Préludes non mesurés* in A minor and C major⁷¹ to explore rhythm and tonality, while categorising the function of the lines within the *prélude non mesuré*.

An unpublished dissertation by Tsuruta⁷² analyses the similarity of twentieth-century interpretations examining recordings by teacher Ruggero Gerlin (1899—1983) and student Blandine Verlet (1942—) produced some forty years later. Tsuruta concludes that Gerlin's interpretation maintains the order of the notes as written, a theory that conflicts with my analysis of Gerlin's recording of the *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor (see Note Placement, p.53).

⁶³ Curtis, "Unmeasured Preludes in French Baroque Instrumental Music."

⁶⁴ Davitt Moroney, "The Performance of Unmeasured Harpsichord Preludes," *Early Music* 4, no. 2 (1976): 143–51, <http://www.jstor.org.virtual.anu.edu.au/stable/3125509>

⁶⁵ Moroney, "Prélude Non Mesuré."

⁶⁶ Gustafson, "A Letter from Mr Lebeque Concerning His Preludes."

⁶⁷ Troeger, "Metre in Unmeasured Preludes."

⁶⁸ Troeger, "The French Unmeasured Harpsichord Prelude."

⁶⁹ Tilney, *The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord, France, 1660 - 1720*.

⁷⁰ Donna Jean Beccia-Schuster, "Interpretation of the Unmeasured Preludes of Louis Couperin as Applied to Prelude No. 9 in C Major."

⁷¹ Philip Chih-Cheng Chang, "Analytical and Performative Issues in Selected Unmeasured Preludes by Louis Couperin."

⁷² Tamiko Tsuruta, "Twentieth-Century Performance Practices of Préludes Non Mesurés by Louis Couperin" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2010).

Tsurata establishes that Verlet's performance does not show the influence of her teacher Gerlin, rather her interpretation is influenced by the ideas suggested by the more recent research by Moroney and Tilney that address metre and performance styles of the *prélude non mesuré*.

USE OF CURVED LINES

Much research investigating the interpretation of curved lines used in the *préludes non mesuré* has emerged in recent years. Tilney summarises the alternate interpretations of the lines employed by different composers. Four kinds, or uses, of lines can be found within the *préludes non mesurés*:

- Single (tenues)
- Multiple (liaisons)
- Curved lines acting as a modern slur
- Linking two notes together

Tilney breaks down the different applications of the lines. "Single lines, attached to one note at their start, require that note to be held at least until the end of the line... Multiple lines have both ends attached to notes and imply that all harmonically relevant notes should be held until the final note has been played; in many cases, the chord – or certain notes from it – should be held longer still".⁷³ The references that Tilney provides for each linear example in *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor are Single – 1L1 and 2, Multiple – 1R3-6 and 7-10 (see Fig. 14).



Figure 14: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor (opening passage)
(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 2 Modern Transcriptions, p.1)

Tilney notes a difference between the facsimile version and his modern transcribed edition. In the facsimile of the *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor, the left-hand note is placed under the right-

⁷³ Tilney, *The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord, France, 1660 - 1720*, vol 3, 5.

hand note following the first barline (1L3/1R11). In Tilney's modern transcription he places the left-hand note (1L3) before the right-hand note (1R11), making it independent of the right hand. Due to the high cost of printing music in the seventeenth century, manuscripts may have contained less white space than later publications, and it was left to the musician's discretion to musically decipher such moments. This may explain examples where the resolution of one harmonic statement was placed directly above the following statement (see Fig. 15). At this point, Tilney deviates from the facsimile (10L3/10R6) and he intentionally places the left-hand note after the right hand, suggesting "the lines thus serve to impart order to the music, preventing events from happening too fast."⁷⁴ In other words, rather than performing this passage as a modern performer would, playing both notes at the same time (10L3/10R6), Tilney interprets the longer connecting lines to mean that the C4 should be executed before the C3, imparting a sequence to the score. Harmonically this also makes sense, as the initial chord forms A minor, and the following notes form D major⁷.

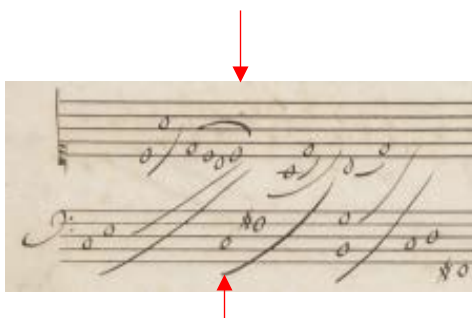


Figure 15: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor (Bar 10)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.2)

Curved lines act as a modern slur in the third example "grouping together several unaccented notes that are to be played legato", specifically identifying the example in bar 2 (2R6 – 2L9). F4 (2R6) already has above it the line indicating the length of the note to be held (until 2L9). However, this additional line denotes slurring from the F4 to the F[#]2. Another example in the same prelude is bar 1 (1R16 – 1L5). The fourth example links together notes to form an ornament (for example *port de voix*) or "as an expressive, rhythmically inflected pair" (with the accent placed on the first note), as seen again at 1R3 – 4, 1R5 – 6 (see Fig. 14).

Tilney recommends the lines be considered as guides only, and that the tone should not stop immediately when a line finishes; the lines are merely suggestive as to when the keys should be released. He explains that the lines show the minimum duration that notes should be held,

⁷⁴ Ibid., 6.

rather than the maximum, and that the lines link each note: “Since the essence of this music is the delicate melting of one harmony into another, relying heavily for its effect on the decay of individual harpsichord notes – faster in the treble than in the bass, different on different instruments – it would be pedantic to insist that the finger be lifted at the precise point where the line ends.”⁷⁵ “In fact, the lines show minimum, not maximum duration, and should ideally reveal the link between one salient note and the next.”⁷⁶

In his review of Tilney’s work, Langham-Smith also references this point in the text, noting “this might be sensible advice, but there is no ‘in fact’ about it! This is the comment of the wise and practiced harpsichordist rather than the supported account of the musicologist, and none the worse for that.”⁷⁷ Although Gustafson acknowledges the “important contribution” of Tilney’s research in his review of Tilney’s publication, the former does give some “musicological quibbling”.⁷⁸ Gustafson is of the opinion that Tilney is subjective and has a “tendency to state interpretations or even intuitions as facts: ‘Straight lines in Louis Couperin are of three kinds [...] Multiple lines have both ends attached to notes and imply that all harmonically relevant notes should be held until the final note has been played.’ This does come from the section headed ‘Performance’, but it is not as clear as it might be that we are talking about the editor’s intention in placing the lines, not what Couperin did or meant – which we do not know.”⁷⁹ Gustafson also notes that although Tilney’s bibliography referenced Gustafson and Fuller’s *A catalogue of French Harpsichord Music, 1699 – 1780*, Gustafson feels that it was an “unconsulted insertion” paying lip service to the research undertaken by Gustafson and Fuller.⁸⁰

MULTIPLE PURPOSES OF LINES IN THE *PRÉLUDES NON MESURÉS*

Within the collection of L. Couperin’s sixteen *préludes non mesurés*, there are five different examples of lines used.⁸¹ The first example acts as a modern barline—of which there are five examples within L. Couperin’s sixteen *préludes non mesurés* (see Fig. 16). Troeger observes “the

⁷⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 5.

⁷⁷ Richard Langham Smith, “Reviewed Work: The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord by Colin Tilney,” ed. Colin Tilney, *Early Music* 21, no. 1 (1993): 133, <http://www.jstor.org.virtual.anu.edu.au/stable/3128338>

⁷⁸ Gustafson, “The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord: France 1660-1720 by Colin Tilney.”, 650.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 649.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 650.

⁸¹ Tilney notes only three types of straight lines, as he combines the middle three examples listed below (treble clef with note underneath, bass clef with note above, and full barline with note beneath) as one group).

basic chord changes should generate ‘bar-lines’ in any realization of a prelude”,⁸² which he believes is similar to the styles of *allemande*, *tombeau* and *toccata*, where a chord is generally not held over a barline unless as a pedal.

The second, third and fourth examples emphasise a note as a strong beat, and there are six examples (see Fig. 17-19). The final line shows that two notes should be played together, with four examples (see Fig. 20). The first and third lines suggested by Tilney were also used by other composers (Examples One and Five), however L. Couperin was the only composer to use the Examples Two, Three and Four.

LINES FROM THE SIXTEEN *PRÉLUDES NON MESURÉS*

Example One:

- Full barline: five examples
 - Prelude One (x2: 1R10 and 37R22)
 - Prelude Three (9R14)
 - Prelude Eleven (x2: 2R3 and 8R10)

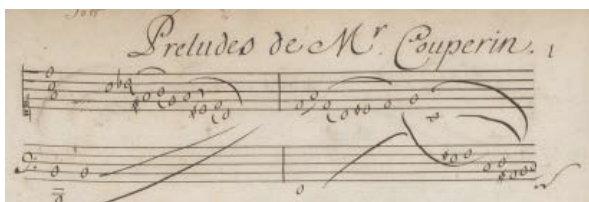


Figure 16: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor (opening passage)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.1)

Example Two:

- Treble clef with note underneath: three examples
 - Prelude Four (1R5)
 - Prelude Eleven (3L11)
 - Prelude Sixteen (4R3)



Figure 17: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: F major (opening passage)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.14)

Example Three:

- Bass clef with note above: one example
 - Prelude Four (4R2)

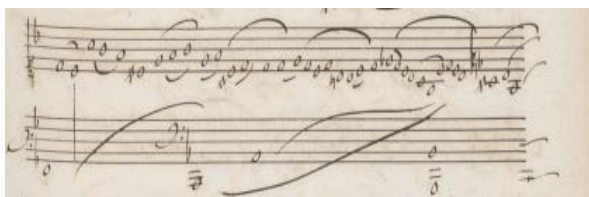


Figure 18: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: F major (Bar 4)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.15)

⁸² Troeger, "Metre in Unmeasured Preludes.", 343.

Example Four:

- Full barline with note underneath: two examples
 - Prelude Ten (6L3) (Fig. 19)
 - Prelude Eleven (4L9)

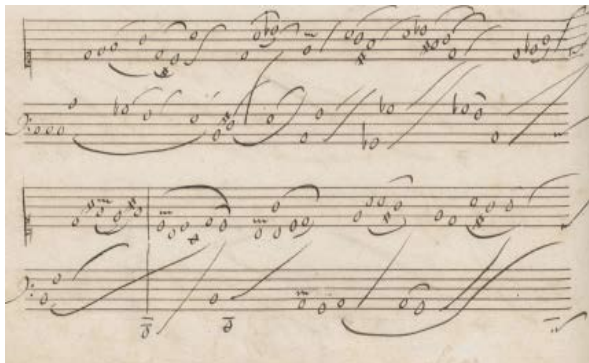


Figure 19: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: C major (Bar 6)
(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.30)

Example Five:

- Joining lines between treble and base notes: four examples
 - Prelude Nine (10L2/10R10)
 - Prelude Ten (x3: 4L10/4R15; 4L11/4R23 and 9L14/9R26) (Fig. 20)

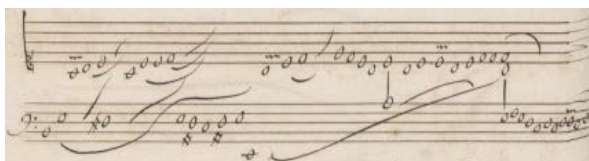


Figure 20: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: C major (Bar 9)
(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.30)

barline, as shown above in Example One, may denote several options. It could suggest the use of articulation to clear all notes for the upcoming harmonic change to A major (V). However, these options remain speculative, as L. Couperin does not appear to use this method again. The repetition of the A2 (2L1) could be due to the sound of the first A2 (1L3) having faded away and L. Couperin wanting the note to continue to the following harmonic change of D major (2L9). L. Couperin's use of barlines indicates to the performer an upcoming harmonic change that requires articulation (see Fig. 16), or to clearly indicate the placement of two notes together (see Fig. 20). By drawing the eye to the vertical inclusion, they also briefly interrupt the visual aesthetic of the unmeasured flow of the score.

Lebègue was the only other composer to employ diagonal barlines irregularly in all but his first prelude, although he does use the barline once in the straight modern format in his A minor *prélude*. His employment of such diagonal lines contravenes the vertical structure imposed by strictly aligned counterpoint (see Fig. 21). The advantage of the diagonal barline is that it seems to conceptually represent the decay of the harpsichord's arpeggiation, and so might encourage

a performance that is connected more with resonance and sound of the instrument, rather than formal counterpoint, which is emphasised in notation that is strictly vertically aligned.



Figure 21: Nicolas Lebègue: *Les Pièces de Clavessin: Prélude* (extract)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 1 Facsimiles, p.68)

D'Anglebert uses the full barline to indicate a change in harmony in the alternative rhythmical version of his first *prélude non mesuré*, not his unmeasured version. D'Anglebert also uses the joining line (see Example 5) in both his purer *prélude non mesuré* and the more measured version. Marchand includes two full barlines to indicate a change of character in his one *prélude non mesuré*. Rameau only uses a full barline once, before the final bar in his unmeasured section of his *prélude non mesuré* in A minor. Jaquet de la Guerre, d'Anglebert, Clérambault and Siret all use examples of the joining lines that connect notes between staves, as illustrated in Examples 2, 3 and 5. Le Roux is the only composer who does not include any barlines in his four *préludes non mesurés*. Within the anonymous *préludes non mesurés*, five have the example of the full barline, and six use the diagonal lines.

This concludes this chapter addressing the performance practice relating to the *prélude non mesuré*. The information discussed will inform the following chapter that discusses analysis of the represented recordings, and presents the findings of the current investigation.

CHAPTER TWO

PHONOMUSICOLOGICAL SOURCES RELATING TO THE *PRÉLUDE NON MESURÉ*

This chapter will compare established performers' interpretations by analysing variance in performance styles presented by notational practices evident within the score. Due to the indicative open nature of the *prélude non mesuré* notation, this enquiry addresses ways of interpreting the genre in an informed historical sense, looking to establish if the manuscript is a roadmap (see footnote 83, p. 36). Bowen notes the score has several uses, "as a sample of only a single performance of a musical work or a summary of several actual or potential performances of the (presumably) same musical work."⁸³ Bowen also argues that the music is "beyond the score" and that to bring the work to life, the realisation through performance is required. Cook writes that it is only once music is considered as the performance, that it is possible to interpret the scores.⁸⁴ This research will investigate the extent to which performers are pushing artistic boundaries with their interpretations, recording potentially more fluid and virtuosic performances. This will inform reflexive analysis of my own playing, in order to ascertain how the outcomes influence my interpretation, as noted in the conclusion. Emmerson documents his journey of preparing Mozart's Rondo in A minor K.511 for performance in May 2004,⁸⁵ and the changing approaches he developed, by researching source documentation, lessons with teachers and listening to audio recordings by peers. His methodology is closely reflected in this reflexive component of this research.

Recorded performances are a major part of the existing literature and as more recordings become available, musicians are able to utilise them to inform their interpretations. There are performers who prefer to prepare a piece without any reference to recordings. Bowen notes that when learning a new piece, many performers claim to not listen to recordings, and that they want their performance to be informed only from the score.⁸⁶ Authors such as Bowen, Nicholas Cook, Barthold Kuijken and Bruce Haynes suggest that modern performers are increasingly more historically informed and confident in their presentation of music from the eighteenth century, and performances of the *préludes non mesurés* are becoming imbued with greater diversity. This study demonstrates that since the Historically Informed Performance

⁸³ Bowen, "Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works", 425.

⁸⁴ Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 1.

⁸⁵ Emmerson, *Around a Rondo: Preparing Mozart's Rondo in A Minor for Performance on Fortepiano*.

⁸⁶ Bowen, "Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works", 438.

movement started prior to the 1980s, performers are making a much greater effort to be more faithful to the original notational nuances, while still leaning towards more idiosyncratic and more varied performances, as evidenced in the section “Note Placement” (see p. 53).

Bowen’s methodology offers a balanced rationale supporting this enquiry, and the new knowledge established through this research responds to acknowledged gaps in the literature. Kuijken notes that “notation [is] mainly a type of roadmap, an aide-mémoire and help for invention, enabling the informed reader to create an inner image of the music. Quite naturally, this image is not definitive, but will change with time, mood, circumstance, and knowledge.”⁸⁷ This notion can be evidenced below, as one performer has released two recordings of the *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor (Table 2, p. 39), which shows a significant variance in duration.

Following the methodologies employed by Bowen, Cook⁸⁸ and Emmerson,⁸⁹ this process initially utilised the programme Sonic Visualiser as a tool to assist with close listening to analyse these performances.⁹⁰ The programme provided the ability to have all the recordings available simultaneously and to be able to swap between each recording once the recordings had been synchronised. Having attempted to use Sonic Visualiser and its additional Plug-Ins, and ascertaining that beyond this simultaneous playback function, any additional analysis using Sonic Visualiser was not viable, the analysis continued with a more traditional tapping method whereby the listener stopped a timer where appropriate. The method was to use the programme purely for synchronised playback to be able to swap between each recording easily while following the score, and to analyse the recordings. Using the stop/start process with this programme meant that tracks did not need to be re-loaded to be able to compare recordings, as was the case when using different programmes such as iTunes. This resulted in recordings being averaged to ascertain duration of sections and specific bars.

⁸⁷ Barthold Kuijken. *The Notation Is Not the Music: Reflections on Early Music Practice and Performance* (Bloomington; Indianapolis; Indiana University Press, 2013), 10.

⁸⁸ Cook, *Beyond the Score*, 143.

⁸⁹ Emmerson, *Around a Rondo: Preparing Mozart’s Rondo in A Minor for Performance on Fortepiano*.

⁹⁰ Having established contact with the developers, I found that due to the Sonic Visualiser programme requiring a significant update since its conception, I was unable to utilise the necessary Plugins required to analyse aspects of performance such as temperament and tuning used. Videos that were available on their website used an older version of Sonic Visualiser, and the resolution of the instructional videos were of poor quality. I was also unable to analyse the preludes due to their unmeasured nature, as the programme was targeted more towards measured performances.

DISCOGRAPHY OF PERFORMANCES OF THE D MINOR *PRÉLUDE NON MESURÉ*

A comprehensive discography of *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor was completed using databases such as WorldCat and Naxos to catalogue all professionally recorded albums released commercially (Table 2, p. 39). Nineteen commercially released recordings of Louis Couperin's *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor are catalogued, of which none of the recordings state which edition is used. *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor was selected for several reasons. Firstly, there are a significant number of recordings by world-renowned keyboardists available. Secondly, this *prélude non mesuré* demonstrates most examples of ornaments and other contentious attributes of the unmeasured genre, such as the use of lines (as barlines and as guidance for note placement). On a personal level, this was the first *prélude non mesuré* I was introduced to twenty years ago and I had a strong desire to investigate the music further to gain a more historically contextualised understanding informing my interpretation.

The earliest recording by Gerlin—dated approximately 1958—was the first volume of a five-volume series of harpsichord music under the L'Oiseau-Lyre Label. The next catalogued recording was not produced until 1982 by Nicholas Jackson (b. 1934–). The only performer to have recorded the prelude twice is Bob van Asperen (b. 1947–), in 1990 under the EMI Classics label and again in 2006 under the Aeolus label.⁹¹

Although there are no D minor recordings between 1960 and 1980, there are recordings of other *préludes non mesurés*. In 1964, Hubert Bédard (1933–1989) released an LP recording of L. Couperin's Suite in G minor, Suite in F major and four Suites by Georg Böhm (1661–1733). There are recordings of other *préludes non mesurés*, such as albums by Andreas Staier (b. 1955–) containing the Suite in F major, released in 2013 by Harmonia Mundi and Alan Curtis's (b. 1934–) 1977 album released by Archiv Produktion which contains Suites in G minor, D major and A minor. The United Archives label released the Complete European Recordings 1928 – 1940 of Wanda Landowska (1879–1959), however there are no recordings of any L. Couperin suites within this collection.

⁹¹ There are currently no available recordings of van Asperen's EMI Classics 1990 album entitled 'Harpsichord Recital'.

PERFORMER	CD TITLE	LABEL	RELEASE DATE
Ruggero Gerlin	Couperin: Complete Works for Harpsichord, Volumes 1-16	L'Oiseau-Lyre	c. 1956
Nicholas Jackson	L'art de toucher le clavecin.	Spectrum 1979	1982
Gustav Leonhardt	Pièces de Clavecin	Philips	1988
Davitt Moroney	Louis Couperin: Intégrale de l'Oeuvre de Clavecin	Harmonia Mundi	1989
Bob van Asperen	Harpsichord Recital	EMI Classics	1990
Blandine Verlet	Louis Couperin – Les Pièces De Clavessin De Mr. Louis Couperin - Tome II	Astrée Audivis	1990
Alexei Lubimov	COUPERIN, L.: Suite in D Minor / Suite in G Minor / D'ANGLEBERT, J.H.: Suite No. 2 in G Minor (French Harpsichord Music of the XVII Century)	Russian Compact Disc	1996
Dom Laberge	COUPERIN, F. and L: Clavecin des Couperin (Le).	Analekta	1997
Catherine Perrin	Harpsichord Recital: Perrin, Catherine - RAMEAU, J.-P. / HANDEL, G.F. / SWEELINCK, J.P. / BACH, J.S. / d'ANGLEBERT, J.-H. / BULL, J.	ATMA Classique	1998
Byron Schenkman	Couperin, L: Harpsichord Music	Centaur	2003
Glen Wilson	COUPERIN, L.: Tombeau de M. de Blancrocher / Preludes	Naxos	2003
Skip Sempé	Louis Couperin	Alpha	2004
Bob van Asperen	Couperin, L: Harpsichord Suites (Vol 2)	Aeolus	2006
Jovanka Marville	Louis Couperin	Aeon	2007
Colin Tilney	Fugue - Bach and his Forerunners	Music & Arts Programs of America	2009
Noelle Spieth	Louis Couperin – Suites pour Clavecin	Universal Classics	2009
Christophe Rousset	Couperin – Suites pour Clavecin	Aparte (AP006)	2010
Richard Egarr	Louis Couperin - Pieces de Clavecin	Harmonia Mundi	2011
Jane Chapman	PIECES DE CLAVECIN FROM BAUYN MANUSCRIPT, Vol. 2: Divers Styles dans l'Eloquence	Collins Classics	2011

Table 2: Discography of *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor

PERFORMERS SELECTED

Of the nineteen available recordings, five were selected after listening to all these recordings. Factors that were considered included the date of each recording, the contribution of the artist to the field of the Historically Informed Performance movement, along with the selection showing the greatest contrast of the nineteen recordings:

- Ruggero Gerlin (1899–1983)
- Gustav Leonhardt (1928–2012)
- Colin Tilney (b. 1933)
- Christophe Rousset (b. 1961)
- Skip Sempé (b. 1958)

Gerlin was selected as the first recording produced prior to the rise of the Historically Informed Performance (HIP) movement (see appendix for full biographies); Leonhardt, due to his stature in establishing the HIP movement and Tilney through the significance of his research on L. Couperin's preludes. Sempé and Rousset represent the younger generation with robust performance reputations within the early music community. Excluding Gerlin, Leonhardt also forms a link between the remaining three performers in his role as a teacher, as he taught many of the leading harpsichordists of this period. However, this does not mean that every student taught by Leonhardt will have a similar interpretation when presenting the *préludes non mesurés*. Van Asperen is the only performer to record this *prélude non mesuré* twice, releasing the first album in 1990 and the more recent in 2006.

Each performer has an individual style. A review of Gerlin's recordings notes:

He has an impressive sense of climax, so that even the short movements sound grand (as they should) as well as gay or pathetic. Indeed his performances of all the pieces – from the conception of mood and architecture down to minute details of ornamentation – is more or less as I had imagined them in my mind's ear; and no musicologist, heaven save us, could say fairer than that!⁹²

Leonhardt spoke openly of his cooler, more calculated, performance style, and was noted for his seriousness.⁹³ This is also acknowledged in Leonhardt's obituary:

Gustav Leonhardt's playing has always symbolized what is most admirable about authentic period performance: technical precision wielded with musical

⁹² Wilfrid Mellers, "French Classics on the Gramophone," *Music & Letters* 38, no. 1 (1957): 68, <http://www.jstor.org.virtual.anu.edu.au/stable/730638>

⁹³ Tom Service, "Gustav Leonhardt: Precision, Coolness, Brilliance - and Alfa Romeos," *The Guardian*, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2012/jan/19/gustav-leonhardt->

conviction and a good knowledge of his sources. Inevitably, there has been a certain sobriety about it—partly associated with his Netherlandish heritage, partly the result of the mantle he has borne with such integrity. Now he has arrived at a stage in his career when he feels able to shrug off what are, in a refined sense, limitations and to play with a newfound freedom and delight: the music fairly sparkles under his fingers on this new recording of pieces by members of the Couperin family.⁹⁴

Tilney is noted to have a “more consonant, balanced, unflamboyant and intimate sound”.⁹⁵ There is only one review of Tilney’s *Forerunners* album, and it addresses the pieces selected, rather than the style of Tilney’s playing. A review of Rousset’s *Pièces de Clavecin* album of L. Couperin notes:

When you remember that Couperin's scoring was "unmeasured" (conveying far fewer indications of note value than later music usually does) Rousset has a huge task to interpret tempi, phrasing and expression. That he does so with such grace and so successfully – yet evidently faithfully to what Couperin wanted – is a great achievement. Rousset's playing has flow, currency, style and precision. But it's also extremely conducive to our responding to the inner spirit that Couperin possessed. Further, Couperin (who died too young, at 35) was remembered immediately after his death chiefly as a harmonist. Rousset is just as successful here, in offering the harmonies and resulting delights of Couperin's inventions.”⁹⁶

Reviewer James Leonard addresses Leonhardt’s influence on his student Sempé. “Sempé has demonstrated that he is the heir as well as the student of Gustav Leonhardt... Sempé gets it, all of it, and plays it with everything he's got. Although there have been notable recordings of Louis Couperin's harpsichord music in the past -- notably Davitt Moroney's magnificent, complete *Pieces de Clavecin* -- one has to go back to Leonhardt's magisterial 1968 and 1980 recordings to hear Couperin played with this kind of conviction and inner compulsion.”⁹⁷

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED (RECORDED) PERFORMANCES

PERFORMER	YEAR	FIRST SECTION	FULL PIECE	PITCH
Nicholas Jackson	1982	0:01:22	0:04:33	Unknown

harpsichord-early-music

⁹⁴ Guest, “CD Review: Couperin Family Harpsichord Works,” *The Guardian*, 1988, <http://www.gramophone.co.uk/review/couperin-family-harpsichord-works>

⁹⁵ Jonathan Woolf, “Review: Contrapuntal Byrd,” *Music Web International*, n.d., http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2016/Apr/Byrd_keyboard_CD1288.htm

⁹⁶ Mark Sealey, “CD Review: Pièces de Clavecin,” *Classical Net*, 2011, <http://www.classical.net/music/recs/reviews/a/apt00006a.php>

⁹⁷ James Leonard, “CD Review: Skip Sempe Plays Louis Couperin,” *All Music*, 2004, <http://www.allmusic.com/album/skip-sempé-plays-louis-couperin-mw0001842979>

Jovanka Marville	2007	0:01:30	0:04:55	392
Skip Sempé	2004	0:01:31	0:04:53	415
Bob van Asperen	2006	0:01:43	0:05:11	392
Bob van Asperen	1990	0:01:46	0:05:28	415
Jane Chapman	2011	0:01:46	0:05:04	415
Noelle Spieth	2009	0:01:49	0:05:22	392
Gustav Leonhardt	1988	0:01:50	0:05:52	392
Catherine Perrin	1998	0:01:50	0:05:02	415
Christophe Rousset	2010	0:01:52	0:05:13	392
Richard Egarr	2011	0:02:05	0:05:43	398
Alexei Lubimov	1996	0:02:06	0:05:30	415
Blandine Verlet	1990	Unable to source	0:06:33	Unknown
Andre Laberge	1997	0:02:12	0:06:23	415
Glen Wilson	2003	0:02:15	0:06:55	415
Byron Schenkman	2003	0:02:19	0:07:18	392
Davitt Moroney	1989	0:02:20	0:05:56	392
Colin Tilney	2009	0:02:20	0:06:33	440
Ruggero Gerlin	1958	0:02:20	0:06:50	440

Table 3: Represents the duration of the first section and the full *Prélude non mesuré* in D Minor.

The names bolded represent those recordings selected for this analysis.

The *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor by Louis Couperin is identified as a toccata,⁹⁸ due to the two freer outer sections and a measured fugal centre section.⁹⁹ Each performer brings a different approach to structuring the piece, treating cadences in a contrasting manner, while interpreting the rich harmonic section uniquely. These variances feed into the duration of sections and the overall piece. Of the nineteen available recordings of the *Prélude non mesuré*, there is a variance of just under one minute (58 seconds) between the fastest interpretation of the first section by Nicholas Jackson, whose recording is one of the earliest (1982), and the longest interpretations by Gerlin (1958), Moroney (1989) and Tilney (2009) (see Table 3). Additionally, there are significant variances in duration of the full piece. Again, Jackson has the fastest interpretation (0:04:33) and the longest is recorded by Byron Schenkman (0:07:18), making a variance of two minutes and 45 seconds. As one of the longest recordings, Tilney's performance has a slow,

⁹⁸ Moroney, "Prélude Non Mesuré."

⁹⁹ Ibid.

thoughtful pace. Leonhardt's is measured and constant, while Sempé's is fast and fiery. Van Asperen plays with such energy in his 2006 recording that the listener can sometimes hear the jacks knocking the jack rail.

Comparatively, it appears to take less time overall to perform the first section of the *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor than in previous years (see Table 4). The two recordings by van Asperen also support this claim. In 1990, van Asperen recorded the first section in 0:01:46, and in 2006 the first section was 0:01:43 (not a particularly significant decrease). However, over the duration of the whole prelude there is a larger variance, as in 1990 he recorded the whole prelude in 0:05:28 and in 2006 it was 00:05:11, a variance of 17 seconds. Such an interpretation may indicate that performers are choosing to maintain a steady unwritten beat, rather than letting the resonance of the instrument dictate when the musician should continue with the melody.

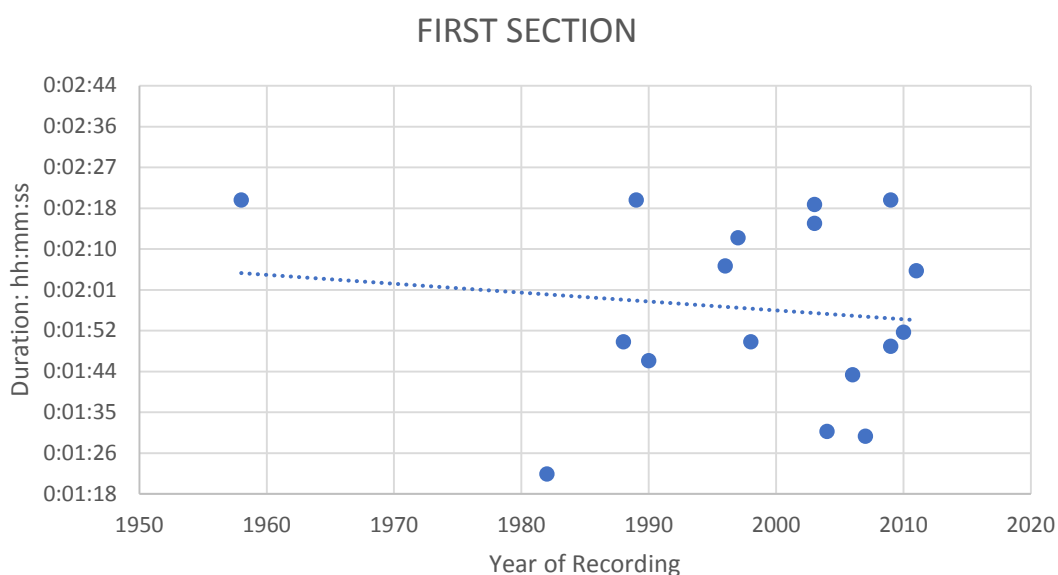


Table 4: Recordings of Louis Couperin, *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor, first section: duration in minutes versus the year the performance was recorded.

INSTRUMENTS

Many of the nineteen album booklets do not list or specify the instruments employed in the recordings, however from the evidence available, it appears that performers are using more authentic instruments than those of the period before historical models were popular. This can be seen in the shift from Gerlin, who was known to record on a Pleyel harpsichord in the 1950s, to Rousset and Jovanka Marville (c. 1965) recording their albums on what is considered one of the oldest surviving French harpsichords, a restored 1658 Louis Denis instrument. A difference can be heard between the two recordings by Rousset and Marville, as the Marville recording

does not have the same reverberation as does the recording by Rousset. It is difficult to state why this may be the case, with many factors that could have contributed, including the venue and the ambient temperature, in addition to the different recording technology that might have been used.¹⁰⁰ The only mention in Tilney's notes is that he plays an eighteenth-century Italian harpsichord, possibly from the workshop of Cristofori in Florence. Sempé also provides limited information, merely that the instrument was made by Bruce Kennedy in 1985, after a French model. In Leonhardt's album booklet, the instrument appears to be an afterthought or indicator of added value, as a sticker is placed on the inside cover stating, "Harpsichord built by Martin Skowronek of Bremen after a French model of the late seventeenth century".¹⁰¹

The registration configuration of most of the instruments used in the recordings is unclear. There is minimal reference in source documentation regarding harpsichord registration, although there was sporadic use of *fort* (loud) and *doux* (soft) and *1er* and *2e* to indicate moving between manuals. L. Couperin is noted as one of the first to provide examples of these references in his compositions.¹⁰² As the *prélude non mesuré* does not include any suggestions for changing manuals, one might assume that L. Couperin did not expect the performer to alter registration between or within sections.

One can ascertain that Gerlin, Sempé and Rousset record on double manual instruments and Gerlin and Sempé utilise the different registers of the instrument to produce contrasting colours. Gerlin moves between the two manuals and Sempé plays with the four-foot engaged for the entire first section. In Leonhardt and Tilney recordings, they both use only one eight-foot register.

Unfortunately, it was difficult to establish if the increased reverberation of the harpsichords encouraged the performers to interpret the *prélude non mesuré* differently. As noted with the recordings by Rousset and Marville, there is a 22 second variance between the duration of the first section, even though both use the Louis Denis instrument. The differing instruments used, the development in recording technology over fifty years, and that no two recordings had the

¹⁰⁰ Having also played the Louis Denis instrument, I was surprised at its delicate sound, after hearing the two recordings. I assumed a larger, more robust sound would be created by the instrument.

¹⁰¹ Gustav Leonhardt, "Armand-Louis, François, Louis Couperin - Pièces de Clavecin" (1987) Front cover, doi:00028942093928

¹⁰² David Fuller, "Harpsichord Registration," *Diapason* 69 8 (1978): 6.

same location or recording engineers makes it challenging to analyse the data in order to be more specific.

PITCH AND TEMPERAMENT

Although pitch and temperament are related, these two aspects are also quite distinct from each other. Temperament affects the variances between each degree of the scale. Pitch, however, was created by musicians as a point of reference for tuning (in appropriate temperaments) and has fluctuated significantly over the last four hundred years.¹⁰³ Historical pitches were used to ensure that the character of the instrument was being conveyed. These variances in pitches would also change the quality of a piece. Charpentier notes in his 1690s treatise *Règles de composition*, the affect associated with D minor was 'Grave et dévot' (Grave and devout). Mattheson wrote in his 1713 publication addressing the affects that he was referencing *Cammerton* associated with woodwind and other instruments, rather than *Chorton* associated with organ or brass instruments (although Haynes states this is still not an accurate means for establishing pitch).¹⁰⁴

This research shows that as time progresses, there is evidence that performers are becoming better informed as more knowledge becomes available. This can be seen when analysing the various pitches used, and van Asperen's recordings support this statement. In his 1990 recording, van Asperen uses A=415 Hz, and in 2006 he records at A=392 Hz, a pitch identified as a more traditional French Baroque pitch. Only two performers, Gerlin and Tilney, record at A=440 Hz, considered modern pitch. That Gerlin uses A=440 Hz is not surprising, given the lack of available literature into historical pitches available at the time of his recording. However, that Tilney also uses it in 2009 suggests that he did not feel that pitch was as an important aspect of the genre to address, given his *prélude non mesuré* research published in 1991. Gerlin and Tilney both record the longest first section at 2:20, and there are only two recordings that are longer for the overall piece.

Seven keyboardists record at A=415 Hz, including Sempé, and the earliest recording is in 1990 by van Asperen, showing that even as his first recording, he is still leading the way in using historical pitch. There is a period between 1990 and 2003 where all the recordings were at 415 Hz, followed by the period where 392 Hz became the prevailing pitch used. This suggests that

¹⁰³ Bruce Haynes, *A History of Performing Pitch: The Story of "A"* (Maryland and Oxford: Scarecrow Press Inc, 2002), xxxiv.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, xli.

performers were becoming more historically informed in the French Baroque pitch. Seven musicians use the more traditional tuning of French Baroque pitch of 392 Hz, including Leonhardt as the first example in 1988, and Rousset as one of the later examples in 2010. Rousset's CD booklet notes 'The instrument's tuning is around 392Hz, which is what it must have been at the time, if we take into account the length of the vibrating part of the C3 string'.¹⁰⁵ There is not a specific pattern to the use of 392 Hz since 1958, as this tuning is scattered throughout. However, after Leonhardt and Moroney (in 1989) five of the seven between 2003 and 2010 are recorded at 392 Hz, suggesting a wider increase in historical tuning knowledge.

In the booklet accompanying his recording, Richard Egarr notes that he plays at 398Hz, suggesting the pitch varied for this repertoire, being "anywhere from a' = 360Hz (-ish) to a'=407 (-ish)... My instrument (the Ruckers copy) decided, after some months of rest and relaxation with Louis, that it liked precisely (according to my Korg tuner) 20 cent sharp of a'=392Hz. – which is around a' = 398. And so the decision was made."¹⁰⁶ He is the only performer to record at 398 Hz.

Haynes notes the shift in performing style did not begin to occur until the 1960s, with questions only occasionally being raised regarding pitch, instruments, ensemble sizes and unfamiliar playing techniques as a result of the closer study of original period instruments.¹⁰⁷ The variance between the other four performers supports the evidence of the fluctuating A1 during the 1600s. Prior to the instrument revolution of c.1670, the pitch of A1 could vary anywhere between A=388 to A=490, depending on country, region within the country and the instrument used.¹⁰⁸ This analysis shows that although a modern performer could use any pitch, it is recommended that they consider the realm of historical research to inform their choice of pitch. Based on Egarr's example, a performer may consider becoming familiar with their instrument prior to recording, thus establishing a pitch to which the instrument naturally gravitates.

The question of temperament is more difficult to address, as the method using Sonic Visualiser was not available, and only three recordings offered information regarding temperament, all identified as meantone. Egarr notes he uses an adjusted quarter-comma meantone or *ordinaire*,

¹⁰⁵ Christophe Rousset, "Louis Couperin" (2010), 19.

¹⁰⁶ Richard Egarr, "Louis Couperin: Pièces de Clavecin" (2011), 5. doi:HMU907511.14.

¹⁰⁷ Bruce Haynes, *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer's History of Music for the Twenty-First Century* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2007), 45.

¹⁰⁸ Haynes, *A History of Performing Pitch: The Story of "A."*, 99.

which was common during the first half of the seventeenth century. He notes this “brings a strong, pungent taste (more Roquefort than Brie) to the music’s highly charged chromatic/harmonic content.”¹⁰⁹ The three different temperaments Catherine Perrin (b. unknown–) uses are meantone, Vallotti and equal, and her interpretation of *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor is in meantone.¹¹⁰ It is possible that temperament influences Egarr’s recording, as he dwells slightly at points where the tuning is more pronounced, for example at 6R21-22, a point where the melody moves from C#5 to D5. Perrin also uses the tuning to emphasise points of interest, with moments where she chose to linger slightly to accentuate the character of the temperament. Jane Chapman is the third to use quartercomma meantone. Given that all the other recordings do not offer any information, it would suggest that modern performers consider using meantone when performing the *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor, although this is more speculation rather than the identification of solid evidence.

SOURCE DOCUMENTS

Drawing on the information addressed in the period commentary and the notational practices evident in the manuscripts, analysis of the duration of the first *croches blanches* section of the *prélude non mesuré* in D minor explores modern interpretive approaches using the four-part schema noted below. The Bowen framework underpinned the analysis of five selected recordings in order to show how modern performers’ interpretations of notational detail and performance style within the *prélude non mesuré* itself changed.

As noted above, Lebègue and F. Couperin address the difficulty of making the genre of the *prélude non mesuré* genre intelligible to all keyboardists. These two performer/composers were the only practitioners to provide source documents that discussed performance interpretation relating specifically to the *Prélude non mesuré*.

Within their source commentaries, four stylistic aspects are presented:

- Aspects of chord playing
- Note placement
- Line interpretations
- Rhythmic variety

¹⁰⁹ Egarr, “Louis Couperin: Pièces de Clavecin.”, 5.

¹¹⁰ Catherine Perrin, “24 Preludes” (1998), 8.

ASPECTS OF CHORD PLAYING

On the harpsichord, restriking an arpeggiated chord is a means of sustaining the tone, like that of an organ, ensuring the harmonic sound is audible to the listener. Lebègue references the technique of restriking the chord in the preface to his *Pièces de clavessin*, as noted on p. 27 of this thesis. Table 5 shows the variances in interpretations between the five performers of the first section, including their execution of the opening and closing chords:

PERFORMER	YEAR	FIRST SECTION	OPENING CHORD (in seconds)	CLOSING CHORD (in seconds)
Ruggero Gerlin	1958	0:02:20	2.40 secs	6.00 secs
Gustav Leonhardt	1988	0:01:50	2.63 secs	6.13 secs
Skip Sempé	2004	0:01:31	2.23 secs	2.49 secs
Colin Tilney	2009	0:02:20	8.18 secs	5.72 secs
Christophe Rousset	2010	0:01:53	4.73 secs	9.20 secs

Table 5: Duration of First Section by five selected keyboardists

Gerlin's Pleyel harpsichord does not have a lingering, resonant sound. Rather than re-sounding the note, he leaves melodic passages without the support of the bass harmonies. He delays the placing of the D5 at 6L7, playing it simultaneously with the right hand 6R19 midway through the melody, rather than restriking the chord. He holds some bass notes for longer than suggested by the lines, for example 7L12 can still be heard at 8R16, rather than as the line suggests lifting at 8R14. Gerlin does not restrike chords to solidify a harmony.

Leonhardt's recording is extremely resonant, and the listener can clearly hear the bass notes climbing smoothly from 2L9 (F#6), 2L10 (G6), 3L2 (A6). One can also hear the A minor chord at 14L1 through the descending A scale, before being released for the left hand to participate in the ascending A scale. Leonhardt does not follow the advice of Lebègue, and throughout his recording no chords are restruck to maintain harmonies.

Sempé's recording is also sonorous, and as one of the quickest recordings of the first section, it has a sense of brilliance – fast melodic passages and minimal, deliberate pauses that highlight

on harmonic changes, and quick execution of *tremblements*. Yet due to the speed of the first section there is rarely a moment of reflection in his interpretation. The continual forward movement means that he does not restrike any left hand chords to retain the sound, as the chords remain audible for the duration of the right hand harmonic passage. Sempé does linger briefly over these chords at 14L9-14R18.

Tilney's slower execution of the moving melody potentially provided opportunities to repeat the chord, yet he avoids such a practice. The harpsichord used in his recording has a bass register that is audible for longer than those of the other recordings, such as Rousset's instrument, resulting in the melodic line having the support of the bass register for longer. However, Tilney's slower tempo means the bass harmony still fades away, leaving the right hand unsupported, for example at 4L11-5R5. Tilney does not remain long at 14L9-14R18, meaning that there is no break between the two chords.

Rousset pauses at the chord 4L11-4R15 for so long that the G octave (G2/3) is no longer audible in the left hand. This results in absence of bass harmony to strengthen the G major to G minor shift in the right hand, as suggested by the sweeping lines held until 5L5. This could have been an opportune moment for Rousset to repeat the chord to sustain the harmony, if this is how we might choose to follow Lebègue's advice. He holds the A major chord at 14L1-14R8 until it is inaudible, resulting in the absence of a sustained bass line during the scales that follow, although once again some kind of harmonisation is suggested by L. Couperin's use of the lines. Rousset repeats this technique at the close of bar 14, holding the chord 14L9-14R18 until it cannot be heard, unlike Tilney's swifter execution. Nowhere in the first section does Tilney restrike a chord.

Each performer interprets the opening and closing chords differently (see Table 5). The length of these chords is not reflective of the duration of the whole section. For example, Gerlin's interpretation of the opening chord is the second fastest, yet his is the slowest first section, equal in duration with Tilney. Leonhardt has one of the longest closing chords (6.00 secs), yet his first section was the second fastest (1:50 min). Of the five selected performers, the overall theme for the duration of the opening chord shows an increase by modern performers, suggesting that increased resonance of harpsichords is encouraging performers to enjoy the sound of their instruments more. Of the remaining fourteen examples from the discography,

only one performer is marginally longer in execution than Tilney, being Schenkman (8.19 secs). The fastest execution of the opening chord is recorded by Spieth (2.02 secs).

Gerlin plays the first D minor chord in *style brisé*, however rather than stopping at the top of the chord, he returns down the arpeggio, taking 2.40 seconds to complete (see Fig. 22):

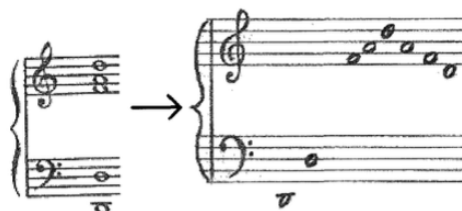


Figure 22: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor (opening chord)

This figure shows Gerlin's *style brisé* interpretation of the opening chord of the D minor *prélude non mesuré*

(Source: Tsurata, 2010. 109)

Leonhardt quickly rolls upwards without restriking the chord or adding additional embellishments (2.63 seconds). Sempé is the fastest of the five performers executing the first chord in 2.23 seconds. Tilney expands on Gerlin's idea further by rolling up, down and then completing the *style brisé* by rolling up the chord once more. This makes Tilney's opening chord the longest, taking 8.18 seconds to complete. Rousset also plays as written (4.73 seconds), like Leonhardt, however his execution is nearly twice the length of Leonhardt's and half the length of Tilney's.

To further emphasise the differences each performer brings to the structure of the piece, it is pertinent to compare the final cadence of this section in bar 15, having examined the opening chord. Gerlin and Leonhardt have differing interpretations. Where Gerlin connects the two left hand notes together at the beginning of bar 15 (14L1-2), Leonhardt phrases the left-hand D3 (15L2) with the right-hand notes, creating a five-note pattern, rather than four. Leonhardt pauses slightly between the two slurred notes (15R1-2, 15R3-4), and then plays the three-note descending stepwise pattern quickly the first time (15R6-8). Like Gerlin, he plays a ritardando for the second three note pattern (15R14-16). Both Gerlin and Leonhardt's recordings allow the sound to continue through to the final chord, but Leonhardt rolls the final chord slowly, pausing before he places the final F[#]4.

Both Sempé and Rousset resume this passage following one of their respective longer pauses and both interpretations replicate Leonhardt's, executing the left-hand D4 with the right-hand notes (15R3-8). However, Sempé and Rousset continue the movement all the way through until the final descending passage (15R14-16). Sempé's final chord is prefaced with a *port de voix* on the C#4 (15R16) and his spread is much faster than Leonhardt's and Rousset's, reflected in the timings (Table 5). Rousset's final chord is executed similarly to Leonhardt's – slowly and thoughtfully, although Rousset merges the second to last note (C#4) with the final chord.

Tilney plays the left hand into the right hand (15L1-R4), while combining E4 and F4 in the right hand to create a trill before pausing on 15R5, a pattern he repeats on the next set of notes (15R11-12). He plays the descending passage quickly into the left-hand A3 (15L3) and continues the momentum into the G4 (15R13). For the final chord, Tilney starts on the higher left-hand D3, not placing the octave lower D2 until after the right hand has completed its spread up, and unlike Gerlin and Leonhardt, back down. All five performers accentuate the top notes of each group of notes, to create a descending melody of A4(15R5), G4 (15R13), concluding on the F#4 of the final chord.

Overall, placement of the last chord has not resulted in a longer duration of the first section; in fact, over time the interpretations of the first section have become shorter, as can be seen in Table 4. However, as the most recent recording, Rousset does differ from this trend by lengthening the final chord. The lack of increase is possibly because this is the closing chord of the section, rather than the final chord of the piece. However as noted for the first chord, performers are choosing to linger longer than in the earlier recordings, letting the resonance of the instrument speak for itself. These variances in length of the outer chords have not resulted in the first section duration becoming longer.

Musicians will often adjust the tempo of a piece to convey different affects of the music they are playing, but in this genre, the player can use a greater variety of tempos to present different musical ideas. Tempo is a crucial aspect of performance that is not addressed within the historical sources discussing the *prélude non mesuré*, and only once mentioned in the secondary literature. Tilney writes that the preludes are more aesthetically effective when played at a slower tempo, a theory supported by the direction of Froberger echoing Frescobaldi's 'et se joue

lentment' (to be played slowly).¹¹¹ Tilney goes on to discuss the placement and *affect* of notes and chords, rather than the overall tempo of the piece.

With the advent of sophisticated recording equipment, we can now start to trace how chains of influence might develop by looking specifically at tempo. Gerlin's 1950s interpretation is one of the longest first sections (2:20 min), and three decades later Leonhardt's interpretation is thirty seconds shorter. By 2004, Sempé presents a significantly faster and rhythmically energised performance. Tilney aligns with his research by recording his version at 2:20 min, making for a longer interpretation. Rousset's tempo mirrors that of Leonhardt, recorded at 1:53 min. Sempé's recording is the most musically effervescent in employing the fastest tempo and is no less aesthetically effective, even though his performance is nearly a minute faster than those by Tilney and Gerlin. However, Sempé's interpretation appears to be less concerned with some of the minimal directions relating to historical performance practice, as will be discussed.

The resonance of the instrument is a further factor influencing the restriking of chords. Revival instruments such as the Pleyel harpsichord used by Gerlin are now considered antique, along with Gerlin's style of playing. By the 1950s, replica harpsichords were being constructed in a more historically authentic way, as seen by the Zuckermann kits that were becoming available.¹¹² The characteristics of a Pleyel instrument means that Gerlin's performance has a different colour and tone quality to the other performances, resulting in a larger resonance than the instrument due to the material used to construct the Pleyel. This additional sound does not require Gerlin to restrike chords, just as Sempé's chosen 8', 8', 4' registration selection also removes the need to restrike due to the additional sound created by using three strings.

In summary, none of the five performers follows the advice of Lebègue to restrike chords to sustain harmonies in the first section of the *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor. Tilney restrikes the opening chord to sustain the sound, but this is the only point in the piece where he does. Gerlin and Sempé reinforce bass notes by adding octaves, Gerlin more frequently than Sempé. Leonhardt and Rousset do not restrike.

¹¹¹ Moroney, "Prélude Non Mesuré."

¹¹² Howard Schott and Edward Kottick, "Zuckermann, Wolfgang Joachim," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, 2014, accessed January 30, 2017.

Analytical reflection upon the primary source commentary and decisions made by performers regarding tempi suggests that historically-informed performances of the *prélude non mesuré* allow for a broad range of tempi, and should not be limited to a slower tempo, as stated by Tilney.¹¹³ By disregarding the source documentation advice to restrike chords, each performer is suggesting that they do not feel there was anything lacking harmonically in their interpretations that would require the reinforcement of a restruck chord or note. One can draw the conclusion that based on the interpretations of the five examples to not restrike chords, the most informed presentation of these *préludes* avoids following the source document instructions of restriking the chord, thus reducing the complexity of the interpretation.

NOTE PLACEMENT

L. Couperin wrote the *préludes non mesurés* to provide a performer with a template for an improvisatory form and each player marks their own personal performance stamp on these pieces by making the piece sound extemporised. Lebègue suggests that performers execute all the notes in the order that they are written, as previously provided on p.26 of this thesis.

F. Couperin also recommends this straightforward approach in his preface to *Troisième livre de pièces de clavecin*:

Je suis toujours surpris (apres les soins que je me suis donné pour marquer les agrémens qui conviennent à mes Pièces, dont j'ay donné, àpart une explication assés intelligible dans une Méthode particuliere connue sous le tutre de L'art de toucher le Clavecin) d'entendre des personnes qui les ont aprises sans s'y assujétir. C'est une négligence qui n'est pas pardonable d'autant qu'il n'est point arbitraire d'y mettre uls agrements qu'on veut. Je déclare donc que mes pièces doiventêtre exéutées comme je les ay marquées: et qu'elle ne feront jamais une certaine impression sur les personnes qui ont le goût vray, tant qu'on n'observera pas a la letter, tout ce que j'y ay marqué, sans augmentation ni diminution.

I am always surprised (after the care I have taken to indicate the ornaments appropriate to my pieces about which I have given, separately, a sufficiently clear explanation in a Method under the title The Art of Playing the Harpsichord) to hear people who have learned them without following the correct method. It is an unpardonable negligence, especially since it is not at the discretion of the players to place such ornaments where they want them. I declare therefore that my pieces must be played according to how I have marked them, and that they will never make a true impression on people of

¹¹³ Tilney, *The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord, France, 1660 - 1720*. vol 3, 7.

real taste unless played exactly as I have marked them, neither more nor less.¹¹⁴

By addressing the persuasive conventions of the day relating to ornamentation, F. Couperin not only clarified his expectation that his music was complete as it stood on the score, but he also implied that performers took great liberties in adding further embellishments. Wanda Landowska is considered one of the earliest advocates for seventeenth and eighteenth-century repertoire and a leading figure in the revival of the harpsichord in the twentieth century. In 1964, when addressing Italianate music, she wrote that performers were to embellish and ornament extensively, and to fill in empty passages, as the works were incomplete and just a harmonic skeleton.¹¹⁵ In comparison of the five recordings, Gerlin is the only performer to create octaves, for example, in the final note of bar 3 where he includes the lower octave to the (3L8) D3 with D2. At bar 10 he doubles the 10L3 C3 in the left hand with the lower C2. This demonstrates Landowska's influence on his interpretation, noting that Gerlin did often include additional harmonic notes, following Landowska's teaching of performance techniques:

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries more liberty was left to performers and conductors than is today. . . . Interpreters . . . had to realize the figured bass, to ornament the adagios, to fill in the empty places in passages where the composer had merely indicated a harmonic skeleton. Without these additions the works were incomplete.¹¹⁶

These examples of note-doubling appear to underline Gerlin's understanding, possibly deriving from Landowska, that these passages are "empty places" in need of filling in. This alters the quality of the sound at points of harmonic interest, for example at 7L12 (F2) with the doubling making Gerlin's performance 'rather expressively colorful and majestic'.¹¹⁷ As previously noted, part of this colourfulness also comes from Gerlin's changes of registration on the Pleyel harpsichord. The listener can often hear him swapping between the two manuals of the harpsichord and one also notes the inclusion of the four-foot stop.

Like Gerlin, Leonhardt and Sempé shift the placement of some notes, not always playing note after note, as suggested by Lebégue's written references. In bar 12, these three performers place the 12R8 D4 before the G3 in the left hand (12L13) to close the D major harmony before

¹¹⁴ David Tunley, *François Couperin and "the Perfection of Music"* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 106.

¹¹⁵ Wanda Landowska, *Landowska on Music*, ed. Denise Restout (New York: Stein and Day, 1964), 94.

¹¹⁶ Tsuruta, "Twentieth-Century Performance Practices of *Préludes Non Mesurés* by Louis Couperin.", 108.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 111.

moving through to the G minor chord. Tilney and Rousset play this bar as written without amending note placement. Bar 13 contains a *tremblement* symbol in the manuscript. Leonhardt omits this trill from his interpretation, and Rousset starts the trill from above.

Sempé's inclusion of additional notes and ornaments adds an air of unpredictability to the interpretation. He adds embellishing notes throughout this section, for example immediately adding a trill on bar 1 (1R16) having added an additional A at 1R15, to strengthen the A5 after the barline. He does not play the mordent 3L1, adding an appoggiatura instead. Bar 6 includes a trill with a turn on 6R1, and lower mordent on 6R5. He repeats the final three right hand notes of bar 8 (8R21-23). He adds trills to 9L5 and 9L7, and repeats the three right hand notes of bar 9 (9R5-7) mimicking the earlier pattern. Bar 11 (11R20) includes a trill. Bar 13 (13R3) includes the addition of a turn before completing the trill as written. Trills are added to 14R2 and finally 15R15. Sempé is the only performer to include additional ornaments, as Gerlin, Leonhardt, Tilney and Rousset play only the ornaments in the score. Sempé's interpretation aurally expresses what Tilney conveys in writing regarding tempi: "Chords, too, can sound amazing if they are occasionally broken impetuously, even brutally, and surprise can be achieved just as well by delivering a chord fast and early, as by delaying it and playing it languidly".¹¹⁸

Gerlin (1950s), Leonhardt (1988) and Sempé (2004) have divergent interpretations of note placements throughout and Gerlin is the only performer to double notes. As noted above, the influence of Landowska on Gerlin's interpretation is clear. This effect continues through several generations to the more recent recording by Sempé. The three performers who do deviate from practices discussed within the source instructions do not change the order of notes so much as to change the character of the piece, merely shuffle notes in order to accentuate harmonic points. This is not to say that the piece is lacking, and without the additions the piece is incomplete, as noted by Landowska. As the two most recent recordings, Tilney (2009) and Rousset (2010) are the only two performers to follow the commentary by Lebègue and F. Couperin precisely regarding note placement.

To conclude this section, whether it is following the source document specifically, or supplying what is lacking in an intelligent way by creating octaves, altering, or not altering note placements, each performer renders a convincing performance making these preludes accessible and intelligible for all listeners. However, noting that the two most recent examples

¹¹⁸ Tilney, *The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord, France, 1660 - 1720*. vol 3, 7.

do follow the commentary, one could surmise that the modern performer should in fact adhere to the source documentation regarding note placement, and present an interpretation that reflects the score.

LINE INTERPRETATIONS

Notated lines—different to the ones discussed on p. 30—within the *préludes non mesurés* have several meanings. They can be used to bind tones into harmonic groups, to indicate the length of time a note is to be held to preserve the harmonies while the other hand continues its movement, or to articulate cadential and rhythmic units. These scenarios create potentially limitless ways to perform these compositions. As noted on p. 26, Lebègue speaks to the use of slurs, suggesting a performer hold all notes enclosed within a slur in order to preserve the harmony of the piece. He also notes that the bindings (lines) indicate that the hand that does not have the movement remains held down while the other part continues moving forward. F. Couperin does not inform his readers how to interpret the lines.

There are factors that can influence a performers interpretation when using modern editions, as noted by Chung.¹¹⁹ The variances between visual appearance of the lines, whether curved or straight, and the spacing between notes and ornaments can result in differing approaches to interpretation. Wider spacing between notes that are connected harmonically can make it difficult for the performer to be able to identify them.¹²⁰

Taking into account the vertical and diagonal barlines, there are varying interpretations by the five performers (see earlier section ‘Multiple purposes of lines in the *Préludes non Mesurés*’ p.33). The first bar provides examples of single (tenues) and multiple (liaisons) lines. Gerlin’s interpretation of the first bar does not convey any sense that he is sonically communicating the varying uses of the lines. He does not hold the lowest D1 (1L1) through to the barline, but immediately releases it when he resounds the D2 (1L2). He does not hold B^b 4 (1R3) or F4 liaisons through to the end of either line, and he does not slur any of the four patterns before the barline, and again after. His interpretation is thin, with generally only one left hand bass note being held while the right hand plays the melody. Leonhardt’s interpretation is quite different, as one can

¹¹⁹ Chung, “The Port de Voix in Louis Couperin’s Unmeasured Preludes: A Study of Types, Functions and Interpretation.”

¹²⁰ Ibid., 77.

hear him holding on the left hand D1 and D2, sustaining the liaisons over the audible slurs. Sempé, Tilney and Rousset all interpret the lines in the same manner as their teacher Leonhardt.

After the opening chord, Gerlin continues through the barline, including notes 1R11 and 1R12, pausing slightly before placing the A2 (1L3). If written out this would place notes 1R11 and 1R12 before the barline, not after. Leonhardt pauses on the dominant A2, which is placed after the barline, thereby accenting the note that follows a barline. However, Tilney's performance does not follow his own scholarly recommendation, as he does not pause at the barline. There is no sense of agogic accentuation or any other sense of arrival at this point, with no use of time, duration, dynamics or the delayed placement of the following note for accentuation. Sempé does acknowledge the barline with slight pauses both before and after the barline. As with Tilney, there is no audible confirmation of this first barline by Rousset, although he does hold slightly on 1R14, but this pause is not large enough to affect the forward movement being conveyed. This would suggest that the barline is simply explanatory and that it was inserted by L. Couperin to clarify structure, rather than as an audible instruction meant to be heard.

The longest horizontal line span within *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor encompasses nineteen notes and occurs in bars 5 and 9, with bar 5 also containing the second longest line of eighteen notes length. For all three of these examples, there is a melodic pattern that is executed quickly, and the long horizontal lines inform the performer that they need to hold out previous notes to ensure the harmonies support the melismatic passages. In bar 9, the pattern is a trill in the right hand (on D4/C4), and the line indicates that the F#4 be held while the *tremblement* is carried out. In bar 5 the first nineteen-note line is included with two additional lines (seventeen and sixteen notes long) to create an E diminished chord. This chord has a written-out trill underneath (fifteen notes centred around G3 and A3), finishing on the F3, which also happens to be the start of the thirteen-note ascending run. It is assumed that all features will be executed quickly to ensure the bass notes are audible at the completion of the trills and run. At bar 9 Leonhardt and Rousset both hold these notes until the line is finished, and the resonance of their respective instruments allows the bass notes to still be heard. Tilney and Gerlin do the same, however the resonance of their instruments is not as strong and the D1 at 9L8 can no longer be heard at the end of the line in either recording. As Sempé's interpretation is quite fast, it is not as difficult for the notes to remain audible until the end of the line, and like Leonhardt and Rousset, Sempé holds the notes for the full length. None of the performers holds the notes any longer than the lines written in the manuscript.

Although most of the recordings examined here follow Lebègue's commentary, as we have seen, the duration of the first section varies significantly: 1:31 for Sempé to 2:20 for both Tilney and Gerlin. While such inconsistencies suggest that performers adhere to F. Couperin's desire for intelligent players to provide an individual interpretation the genre of the *prélude non mesuré*, there are significant variances, resulting in the first section's wide-ranging duration. Except Gerlin, all performers' interpretations of the notated lines preserve the harmonies by not quitting the indicated notes as implied by the lines in the score. By not following the advice apparent in the primary sources, as with note placement instructions, Gerlin again reveals his avoidance of the historical sources. Therefore, the recommendation to modern performers is to adhere to the lines to ensure that the identified notes are articulated and held as indicated by the score, in order to convey a performance that preserves the harmonies.

RHYTHMIC VARIETY

Rhythmic variety in the context of the *préludes non mesurés* can address both the local rhythmic alteration, for example *notes inégales*, and broader tempo modifications, and both aspects are considered, looking at the variances of overall duration, along with the execution of *notes inégales*.

Lebègue's preface addresses the nature of the *croches blanches* preludes of L. Couperin and d'Anglebert. Gustafson suggests that following Lebègue's written instructions would potentially make each interpretation sound the same, as there is no guidance to a play in a rhythmically uninhibited style.¹²¹ However, the nature of this genre precludes it from adherence to strict rules. F. Couperin wrote in a more structured notational style, in order to make the interpretation of the preludes accessible to the general public, while maintaining a feeling of liberation, giving rein to any whim a performer may desire, as noted on p. 27.

As noted under the section Compositional Style of the *Prélude non Mesuré* (Page 16), some of Couperin's works can be identified as toccatas, due to the structure of the pieces (the outer two sections are rhythmically free, and the middle section is more contrapuntal, as is often the style of Italian toccatas.)¹²² Moroney identifies a further link between Couperin and Froberger when he compares the *Prelude de Couprin a l'imitation de Mr Froberger*, which he notes is derived from Froberger's first organ toccata, which can also be found in the Bauyn manuscript. Taking

¹²¹ Gustafson, "A Letter from Mr Lebegue Concerning His Preludes.", 13.

¹²² Moroney, "The Performance of Unmeasured Harpsichord Preludes.", 145.

Froberger's opening chord, Couperin presents it in an arpeggiated embellishment, in the style of harpsichord playing, as addressed by Legèbue (Page 26). The variances in interpretations of the five selected performers can be seen on Page 48.



Figure 23: Johann Froberger: Toccata Number 1 in A minor F#WV 101 (opening passage)
(Source: Moroney, 1976. *The Performance of Unmeasured Harpsichord Preludes*, p.146)

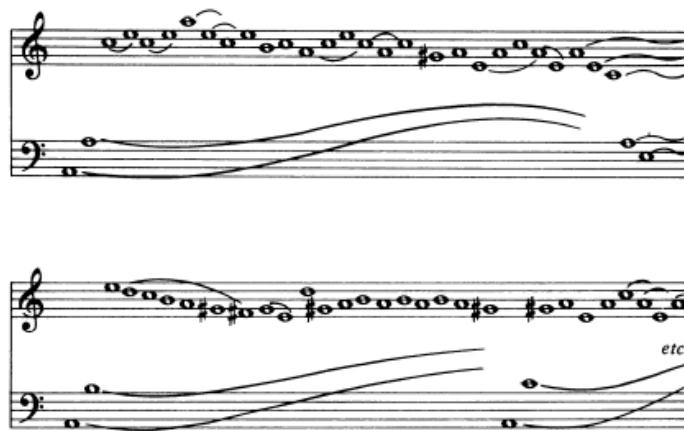


Figure 24: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: A minor (opening passage)
(Source: Moroney, 1976. *The Performance of Unmeasured Harpsichord Preludes*, p.146)

As these preludes were aimed at a wide audience, ranging from amateur to experienced performers, both writers suggest that a performer should present the pieces in a rhythmically unencumbered style. Lebègue suggests that the performer's interpretation may supply what might otherwise be lacking in a performance, and F. Couperin notes that he writes in measured time merely for ease of teaching and learning the *prélude non mesuré*.

This open form of notation was characteristic of the genre, and one could argue the information provided by Lebègue also comes in an obscure form. That Lebègue omitted these *preludes* entirely from his second harpsichord book published, in 1687 due to their lack of unambiguous performative instructions, suggests that performers contemporaneous with the author lacked the necessary expertise and knowledge required to execute imaginative interpretations.

The French practice of *notes inégales* (unequal notes) was considered a means to add interest to melodic passages, without disturbing the metre. Although barlines are generally not included in *préludes non mesurés*, there is an unwritten pulse that a performer naturally conveys when interpreting, and despite affecting the melodic passages, *notes inégales* did not influence the pulse. The rhythmic division between the notes was left to the performer to decide, noting the character of the piece, and can range from barely detectable to double dotting.

Notes inégales is a widely-researched area, and without diverging too far down this path, it seems appropriate to reference key authorities, such as David Fuller and Frederick Neumann. Over the years inquiries have resulted in scholars amending their opinions to reflect new information and new interpretations of older sources. This can be seen in Neumann's comments: "David Fuller, who earlier had himself pointed to the basic *inégalité*, reversed himself in the *Grove* articles by writing that, "...contrary to what is now often said, French inequality ran the gamut from barely perceptible to extremely dotted."¹²³

The use of *notes inégales* provides a performer with a natural way to convey rhythmic variety. Gerlin's use of the *notes inégales* style after the initial chord is not rhythmically regular and results in an unpredictable, jumpy, uneven feeling. Gerlin and Leonhardt both interpret the opening bar with the similar use of the *notes inégales* pattern, noting that Gerlin changes the note positions and employs a more severe use of *notes inégales*. However, Gerlin's approach leads to a more improvisatory interpretation, which is also noted in reviews of his recordings.¹²⁴ At 2L5 Gerlin waits on D3, before moving forward to the next three note passage, also executed with a strong lilt. He often pauses when he reaches the highest point of a musical statement, for example 4R19 – D5 and 5R4 – B^b 4 (Fig 25) before continuing the passage:



¹²³ Neumann, "The Notes Inégales Revisited.", 146.

¹²⁴ Mellers, "French Classics on the Gramophone.", 68.

Figure 25: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor (Bar 4)

(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 2 Transcriptions, p.2)

With the later recordings, the performers' fluid interpretation of the score results in a clear sense of direction being communicated towards points of interest. There is not the prolonged anticipation for the next note, as demonstrated by Gerlin. Gerlin's recording has a constant fluctuation of the beat, faster and then slower, and this is one aspect that may have differed had Gerlin had access to the information that became available through more recent scholarship.¹²⁵ Where there are florid melodic passages, the remaining four recordings maintain a regular feel, all using *notes inégales* stylistically throughout this first section.

As noted, there is significant variances between the duration of the first section that are also reflected in the overall interpretation. Tilney (6:33 min) and Gerlin (6:50 min) record the longest versions of the first section, reinforcing Tilney's belief that the "preludes are better played too slowly than too fast".¹²⁶ However, for the full piece, there are only two examples that are longer than Gerlin and Tilney recordings. Both were recorded in 2003, by Glen Wilson (6:55 min) and Byron Schenkman (7:18 min). At the other end of the scale, Sempé's first section (4:55 min) is one of the fastest of the five analysed examples and there is only one recording that is faster than his, by Nicholas Jackson (4:33 min) in 1982.

Although the duration of Rousset's first section is 1:53min, he executes a notably long pause of five seconds in bar 14 after the first arpeggiated chord (14R8) and another four second pause at the end of the same bar (14L9 – 14R18). Had he chosen to reduce these two pauses, his recording may have been placed further up the chart, sitting approximately around a similar time to van Asperen's two recordings.

Unlike the similarly-timed recording by Rousset, Leonhardt's 1.50min first section does not have the pauses. Leonhardt's interpretation generates a perpetual feeling of moving forward and minimal lingering on points of harmonic interest, as do all the other recordings. Sempé's execution combines energy with moments of stillness, reflecting the vivid harmonic characters of the music, for example 3L1, a moment where he also plays a different ornament from that notated in the score, repeating the G3.

¹²⁵ David Fuller, "You Can't Prove It by Notation," *The Diapason* lxxii, no. 3 (1981).

¹²⁶ Tilney, *The Art of the Unmeasured Prelude for Harpsichord, France, 1660 - 1720*. vol 3, 7.

The listener can hear the influence of Tilney's research in his interpretation. "The player has only two further important things to keep in mind: first, that the sound of the harpsichord, especially the decay of essential bass harmonies, will often influence his timing and shape his phrasing; and second, that he should be aware from first note to last that his business is to compose, not to perform".¹²⁷ This comment means that a performer should consider the music as though he is improvising it for the first time, and not as though it has been rehearsed numerous times. Although his melismatic passages are measured and thoughtful with a strong pulse, there is a sense of space around each musical idea. He also pauses on moments of harmonic interest created by the temperament, for example 4R20-21 where the melody moves from A4 through B^b4, to pause slightly on F[#]4. It is as if the listener can sense Tilney considering the harmonic implications of the next note. Tilney often speeds up a descending passage as it progresses, creating the feeling of momentum towards a harmonically significant point (2L1-9) (see Fig. 26):

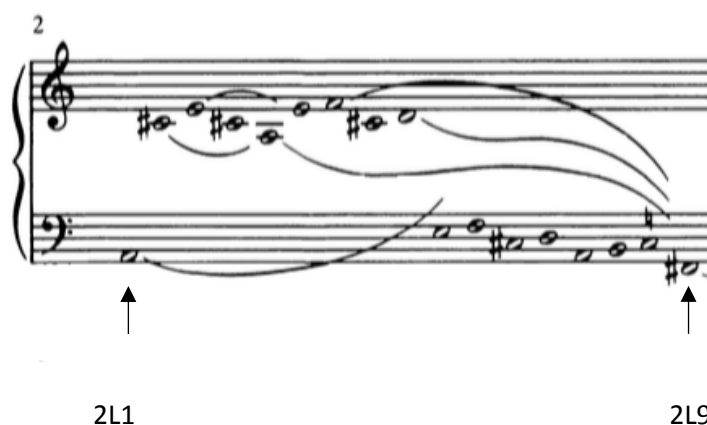


Figure 26: Louis Couperin: *Prélude non mesuré*: D minor (Bar 2)
(Source: Tilney, 2009. Volume 2 Modern Transcriptions, p.2)

Leonhardt's overall interpretation can be summed up in a personal observation of his playing style: 'coolly dispassionate and austere a style'.¹²⁸ The influence of both Leonhardt and Gerlin can be heard in the recordings of the later performers. Gerlin's sense of climax and conception of mood is reflected in the interpretation of Rousset and Sempé. Both older recordings provide influence on the later versions, as previously noted in the review by James Leonard.¹²⁹

The four sequential chords at 9L10-10L11 are of rhythmic interest. Gerlin moves the placement of notes at the beginning of this section: he places 9R18 and 9R19 before the left-hand E3 (9L11) linking E3 instead with C3 and E3 afterwards (10L1 and 10L2), to accentuate the A minor chord.

¹²⁷ Ibid., vol 3, 7.

¹²⁸ Lionel Salter, "Gustav Leonhardt Obituary," *The Guardian*, 2012.

¹²⁹ Leonard, "CD Review: Skip Sempé Plays Louis Couperin."

He also doubles the left-hand with octaves for the structural notes: C3, B2 and C2 (10L3, 5 and 7), leaving the other left-hand notes (10L4 and 6) to create a homophonic sound to the recording. It takes 3.93 seconds for Gerlin to play this passage.

Leonhardt holds the second group of chords at 10L3-10L7 slightly longer than Gerlin, but this is a small variance, taking 4.25 seconds. In Sempé's interpretation, this passage is one of the few moments of stillness. His execution of the two chords at 9L10 – 10L3 is 3.06 seconds, which feels like a long pause. Tilney's execution is longer at 3.76 seconds, although due to the slower nature of his playing this emphasis is not as noticeable as it is in Sempé's recording. Rousset's is the fastest at 2.63 seconds. This brevity of pauses may indicate that Leonhardt was influenced by Gerlin, which in turn led to Rousset to be influenced by Leonhardt, maintaining a performing tradition across the three generations.

Although the *préludes non mesurés* do not provide significant amounts of melodic passages, each performer presents an interpretation that is rhythmically varied, as determined by their stylistic awareness of interpretive practices available at the time of their recording. Each interpretation reflects F. Couperin's advice to play "in a free, easy style, not sticking too closely to the exact time."¹³⁰ Of the selected recordings, Gerlin's use of *notes inégales* is the most radical, with an extremely dotted interpretation taking place. In Leonhardt's 1988 recording the interpretation of the *notes inégales* is barely perceptible, suggesting perhaps that he was influenced by Fuller's 1981 publication on rhythmic alteration.¹³¹ It is also true that adopting Fuller's theories means inequality is more appropriate to measured music, a distinction perhaps lost on Gerlin's performance style.

To conclude this section, within all performers' interpretations rhythmic flexibility is apparent, both regarding local rhythmic alteration and broader tempo modifications. This adheres to the commentary provided in primary sources regarding rhythmic pliability. While Sempé and Rousset's interpretations are more adventurous and playful, they replicate the slower tempo of the older generation of keyboardists. Although there is a strong rhythmic sensibility in the earliest recording, Gerlin presents an interpretation that lacks the finer awareness of stylistic practices such as subtle use of *notes inégales* evidenced in the Leonhardt recording. The earlier supposition that there would be greater rhythmic variety is, in fact, incorrect. Overall, the

¹³⁰ Couperin, *L'Art de Toucher Le Clavecin*. 33.

¹³¹ Fuller, "You Can't Prove It by Notation."

interpretations are rather similar, perhaps owing to the increased availability of primary sources, historical documents and overlapping pedagogical influences. The surveyed performers evidently observe aspects of F. Couperin's preface with varying degrees of overall and more localised rhythmic flexibility suggestive of the players' informed historical awareness and manner of performance. These variances in rhythm also create a more improvisatory interpretation of the *préludes non mesurés*.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this section is two-fold. It will address how the results have informed my own interpretive practice and it will establish conclusions based on the analysis completed in Chapter Two.

Having performed the *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor in various settings over the course of this study, I attempted to follow, then not to follow, the source documentation advice. I have been influenced by lessons with mentors around the world, by the source material, reading about the development of performance practice, and listening to recordings. All these avenues have contributed to my changing understanding of the facsimiles and how to interpret them, based on the methodologies of Bowen¹³² and Emmerson.¹³³ Emmerson considers the different approaches in regard to fortepiano and modern piano, and the methodology utilised in this thesis is specific to harpsichord. However, there are similarities between the two approaches, including listening to recordings and have having lessons with experts.

As Cook notes, the performance goes beyond the score.¹³⁴ However, the score is a fundamental component of this intriguing genre and I have played using both the manuscript facsimiles and modern editions, and every performance is a unique experience.

During the practical component, I have made conscious decisions throughout this process. I have considered the four source document references. When focussing on restriking the chords, I found there were several factors that contributed to my execution. Instrument resonance was a strong determinant, as when an instrument was more resonant I felt the performance did not require the chord to be restruck. However, when the venue had poorer acoustics, or when there was an audience in the venue, it was necessary to restrike chords, or more specifically bass structural notes, to ensure that harmonics were maintained – for example restriking 9L8 when playing 9L9. Following the conclusion to not restrike chords, I intend to follow this advice when performing the *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor in order to present an aural performance that is as simplistic as its visual representation, as noted by Lebègue.¹³⁵

¹³² Bowen, "Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works."

¹³³ Emmerson, *Around a Rondo: Preparing Mozart's Rondo in A Minor for Performance on Fortepiano*.

¹³⁴ Cook, *Beyond the Score*. Disc 1.

¹³⁵ Troeger, "The French Unmeasured Harpsichord Prelude.", 92.

Note placement was an interesting component to consider, as I found it was the most naturally flexible, and once I had completed the analysis of the manuscripts, I made conscious decisions as to whether to include or remove notes, considering factors such as the instrument at my disposal and the acoustics. At 10R7-8 the Parville manuscript includes a C4, which I chose to include in my interpretation, as the C4 acts as the leading note to the D4 tonic (see Fig. 15). I also chose to keep the additional G4 at 11R10 which is written in the Bauyn manuscript but not the Parville, as this echoes the three-note pattern immediately preceding 11R10, and at the beginning of the bar (11R1-3).

A further point where I have chosen to alter the note placement is bar 12, where L. Couperin writes a D major⁷ chord followed immediately by a G minor chord (12L10-12L13). I have chosen to place 12L12 (B^b 2) before 12R8 (D4), in order establish the G minor harmony before the 12R9 (B^b 3) is played. This preference means that the 12L12 is heard before the following two right hand notes, and it alters the pattern of two notes in the left hand followed by two notes in the right hand. It is a small adjustment, which is my personal preference and does not require strict adherence.

Ornaments required a great amount of attention, due to the varying methods of presenting them. My execution of these ornaments changed, following the analysis identifying the additional ornaments embedded in the notation. My execution of ornaments became faster and played with more emphasis on the note directly following them. There was also the decision as to whether the written out *tremblements* were in fact to be executed with the exact number of turns or to be considered more of a suggestion. Following discussion with teachers, I have chosen to interpret the written out *tremblements* as though they were indicated by the symbol.

I observed that my earlier interpretations were less spontaneous and that as my knowledge increased, my playing started to more clearly reflect the ideas of Lebègue and F. Couperin and that my imagination was more engaged in the process. To state confidently that I will not adjust note placements would possibly do any future interpretations a disservice, as I may find myself not participating in, or contributing to the music, and being too concerned with following note

order to let the music speak for itself,¹³⁶ and it was a spontaneous action that resulted in my decision to alter the placement in bar 12.

Line interpretation also required consideration of both the facsimiles and the modern scores. The modern scores were too specific, often with lines finishing at the same point in the score, or shortly after one another. Visually, the manuscript offered me the ambiguity the genre suggests, and I was able to play with more imagination when I was using the facsimiles. As an outcome derived from this study, the harmonies created in the *Prélude non mesuré* in D minor should be allowed to linger. One particular point is bar 14, where L. Couperin moves from the dominant A major to an E diminished chord following a scale passage. The barrenness of the solo A4 at the top of the descending scale, followed by the surprise of the G minor chord (with E^b 4) is enhanced by a longer pause at 14R8, with all the previous notes in this bar held over until the instrument stops ringing, and the keys are released together. The lines also influenced phrasing and required interpretation as to when the tempo required modification and the piece needed to move or be static. Additionally, notes that required accentuation needed to be identified and emphasised for the audience to be able to hear them.

Rhythm was the hardest aspect to reflect on, as each rendition is different. My durations ranged from 1:40 min to 2:40min. I attempted to perform an interpretation at the speed of Sempé, however I found that this tempo was too fast for me, and that I preferred to be able to linger more than to race through the melismatic passages. I also attempted an extremely long rendition, but I found that the instrument was not able to maintain the harmonies and that the recording became quite empty and lacking in any clear direction. I used *notes inégales* whenever there was a scalar passage, but not when the notes created a chord. Upon identifying written out *coulés*, I noticed my interpretation changed at 4R16-18 and 6R15-17. I presented this pattern of three notes more quickly, rather than as part of the melody.

Prior to completing this research, my interpretations were uninformed by historical documents and contemporary recordings. I had limited understanding of implications evident within the points raised by Lebègue and F. Couperin, and my performance imitated views expressed by my teacher, rather than presenting my own interpretation. Throughout the practical component of this research, I have applied the source elements discussed in various combinations to create a

¹³⁶ Richard Taruskin, "On Letting the Music Speak for Itself: Some Reflections on Musicology and Performance," *The Journal of Musicology* 1, no. 3 (1982): 340.

framework of understanding through conscious decisions. I have attempted to add additional notes and ornaments, attempted to restrike chords as recommended to maintain harmonic structure, to hold notes for a longer or shorter period than directed by the lines and to alter the rhythm. At all times, my imagination has been an integral part of the interpretive process. As noted by Bowen, "Investigating performance styles is a natural extension of the initial charter of examining compositional styles. Indeed, it provides an opportunity to integrate the analysis of compositions with an understanding of how they were performed and perceived".¹³⁷ By investigating performance styles, this enquiry has deepened my understanding of the *prélude non mesuré*, and I feel more confident in my interpretation, knowing that I am performing this genre with a greater awareness of historical principles and with a strong sense of imagination, artistry and awareness. As Emerson notes, such an approach means I can now create a performance that is imbued with spontaneity and inspiration.¹³⁸

Before commencing the current project, I believed a significant variance in interpretive style would emerge in the recordings over fifty years. During this research, my assumptions have vacillated. When listening to the sampled performances initially, similarities in interpretive style came to the fore. However, as my analysis of historical sources grew, I began to listen to the recordings in a new light. Themes including the variances in the inclusion of additional notes by each performer, or the large discrepancy in the time taken to execute the first section based on the length of notes, began to emerge. Underpinned by a broader understanding of the source documentation, my analysis of the performances revealed fresh artistic nuances and significant contrasts in interpretations, including the divergent use of *notes inégales*, subtle differences in line interpretations and the lack of digression when restriking chords.

Given advances in historical research, the recorded performances examined demonstrate a keen awareness of stylistic and notational practices of the period. The current thesis establishes the *prélude non mesuré* as a free-spirited work that moves beyond the confines of strict notation. Similarly, it ascertains that the expert practitioners sampled employ an autonomous form of interpretation based upon stylistic awareness of the sources, primarily F. Couperin's: "A Prelude is a free composition, in which the imagination gives rein to any fancy that may present itself".¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Bowen, "Finding the Music in Musicology: Performance History and Musical Works.", 450.

¹³⁸ Emerson, *Around a Rondo: Preparing Mozart's Rondo in A Minor for Performance on Fortepiano*. Disc 1.

¹³⁹ Couperin, *L'Art de Toucher Le Clavecin*, 33.

Although this genre was intended for publication via manuscripts, the music of this period was not conceived to be documented and preserved by modern means of recordings.

With the exception of late-nineteenth-century musicologists such as Guido Adler (1855-1941), it was only during the 1950s that musicology started to become a legitimate academic discipline, when a committee of the American Musicological Society (AMS) published a definition for musicology in 1955.¹⁴⁰ Works were being published as critical editions for the first time, for example many Haydn symphonies, “and *practically the whole corpus of music* by important secondary figures of the Renaissance and Baroque eras such as Giaches de Wert and Louis Couperin”.¹⁴¹ Basic errors were rectified, such as the incorrect authorship of the work, and incorrect year of completion.

The current analysis demonstrates that Gerlin’s interpretation in the 1950s is less reflective of the content addressed within the historical sources than is evident in the latter recordings. Gerlin does present a rhythmically variable performance, but his rhythmic variety is extreme when compared with the later, more historically informed, interpretations. Significantly, he does not adhere to the remaining three source instructions and he contravenes some of the sources by not restriking chords, varying note placements and not retaining notes, as instructed by the lines. Gerlin’s recordings of works by other contemporaneous composers also indicate a capacity for extreme rhythmic flexibility, as can be heard in his interpretation of Armand-Louis Couperin’s (1727-1789) “Les caqueteuses” from *Pièces de clavecin*.¹⁴² This would indicate that Gerlin’s interpretations were not overtly nor heavily informed by historical sources.

Although offering essentially distinctive interpretations, Leonhardt and Rousset eschew the observations of historical commentators by not re-striking chords. Relating this practice to the opening chord, both play only what is notated within the score. In considering the significance of such interpretive gestures, perhaps the establishment of the harmony within the opening chord suggests repetition is unnecessary, as it has already been introduced. Reflection upon the irregularity emerging within the analysis indicates that modern day performers must decide whether they will execute the opening chord as written, or restrike, based on the historical sources. To not restrike the chord would suggest a performer was already familiar with, and did

¹⁴⁰ Duckles, “Musicology.”

¹⁴¹ Matthew Brown, *Debussy Redux: The Impact of His Music on Popular Culture* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 67.

¹⁴² Ruggero Gerlin, “Anthologie de La Musique de Clavecin. L’école Française” (1956).

not require the additional time to adjust to the touch of the instrument. It also suggests they are accustomed to the acoustics of their recording or performance venue, and the venue's ability to adequately sustain the instrument's tone, without requiring the restrike. By avoiding primary source advice, Leonhardt and Rousset are not ignoring the historical information, but merely listening to their own interpretations and deciding at that point in time it is not necessary to restrike chords.

Tilney displays a strong understanding of the source documentation, via his own publication, and as one of the more recent recordings, one might have anticipated that he would use a tuning that was more appropriate to the genre. It may be that as the *prélude non mesuré* was included in an album that also contained J.S Bach, Frescobaldi, Gabrieli and Froberger, Tilney might not have wanted to change temperaments or tuning during the recording process. He does follow the source commentary more precisely than some of the other recordings, resulting in an interpretation that is more indicative of the suggestions by Lebègue and F. Couperin. Although Sempé's interpretation appears to not follow the four aspects, his rendition still addresses F. Couperin's commentary that the performer gives rein to "any fancy",¹⁴³ with the inclusion of additional notes and ornaments, and presenting one of the fastest recordings.

Given that Leonhardt taught or influenced the three latter performers, there is little discernible variance between teacher and students' interpretations. This might suggest that Leonhardt's students (Rousset, Tilney and Sempé) endorse the historical significance of the former's interpretation, while intelligently interpreting the genre, as noted by F. Couperin's recommendation.

Although limited, the source documentation provides modern players with valuable theoretical knowledge to underpin an historically-based interpretation. These performers can now interpret the genre through ease of access to primary and secondary sources, while considering the varying approaches to performance practice within a multitude of recordings to stimulate the musical imagination.

Based upon my analytical observations, the selected recordings reflect the development in musicological research into authentic performance practice. This can be heard in performer's practical demonstration of theoretical principles. Tilney's 2009 recording appears to offer the

¹⁴³ François Couperin, *L'Art de Toucher Le Clavecin* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1933), 33.

most robust reflection of the practical application of the historical sources. While acknowledging the rigour of Tilney's historically-based performance style and artistic expertise in the repertoire, the research indicates that present-day performers should draw upon multi-faceted sources.

No two performances will ever be identical, as shown in the results of this analysis taken from snap shots of each musician. Primary sources and the work of later scholars are available to inform musicians playing the *préludes non mesurés*, and recordings can be used in conjunction with the facsimiles to model an informed interpretation. Expediting methods of interpretation based on historical sources and the work of expert practitioners allows the thesis to become a useful tool for the modern scholar-performer, as we continue to endeavour to clarify L. Couperin's intentions.

This research is significant because, to date, no other studies compare recordings of the same *prélude non mesuré* while addressing the commentary available in primary sources. Furthermore, there is no research available that integrate findings into one's own performance. Although they can offer merely a guide, primary sources are the most accurate instructional source that present-day performers have at their disposal, along with the facsimiles. Analysis of the surveyed recordings shows that it is unlikely that every performance of the *Prélude non mesuré* genre will unwaveringly follow all principles set out within the source documentation. However, the latter four of the five performers examined in this research display awareness of the primary sources through the inclusion of notes or rhythmic variety. These phenomena suggest that the musical and artistic intelligence of performers is crucial, as noted by Lebègue.¹⁴⁴ In order to produce a robust interpretation of the *prélude non mesuré*, Lebègue allows the performer artistic latitude within their interpretation, while adhering to his advice. Evidence within the five decades shows an increased awareness of source documentation, as noted in the varying interpretations of Gerlin and Leonhardt. This is significant as it provides the listener with varying examples of how *préludes non mesurés* were interpreted prior to the discovery of the source documents and subsequently more historically informed recordings. It also shows how the findings have impacted upon my own interpretation of the *prélude non mesuré*. This notational approach imparts the performer with minimal interpretative instructions, and the responsibility falls on the keyboardist to synthesise the knowledge available, while presenting a

¹⁴⁴ Troeger, "The French Unmeasured Harpsichord Prelude.", 92

performance that moves beyond the harmonic structure, to fundamentally present a work as if it were being composed on the spot.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX ONE



"'Marques des Agrements et leurs significations': Table of ornaments by d'Anglebert from his *Pièces de clavecin*, 1689." (Source: Oxford Music Online) ¹⁴⁵

APPENDIX TWO

See attached file for the scores.

¹⁴⁵Kenneth Kreitner, "Ornaments."

APPENDIX THREE

Biography of performers

Ruggero Gerlin (B: Venice, 5 January 1899; D: Paris, 17 June 1983)

Gerlin studied piano at the Milan Conservatory before studying harpsichord with Wanda Landowska in Paris in 1920. Gerlin maintained a working relationship with Landowska until 1940, often performing concerts with two harpsichords. In 1941, Gerlin took the post of harpsichord teacher at San Pietro a Majella Conservatory in Naples, and during this time he taught masterclasses at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena. Gerlin performed regularly and recorded many albums on a Pleyel harpsichord, including the complete works of François Couperin, Louis Couperin and Jean-Philippe Rameau.

Gustav Leonhardt (B: Graveland, 30 May 1928; D: Amsterdam, 16 January 2012)

Leonhardt is considered the 'grandfather' within the Early Music movement. His influence on the Historically Informed Performance movement is well documented and in its 2012 obituary for Leonhardt, The Guardian considered him 'a pioneer and pillar of the early music movement.'¹⁴⁶ Leonhardt was a Dutch harpsichordist, organist and conductor who studied with Eduard Müller at the Schola Cantorum in Basel from 1947 to 1950 before studying conducting with Hans Swarowsky in Vienna. He held teaching posts at the Vienna Music Academy (1952 to 1955), Amsterdam Conservatory (1954 to 1988) and held a visiting professor post at Harvard University from 1969 to 1970.

Leonhardt's discography is significant, and he is well-known for his extensive recordings as both a solo harpsichordist and an organist, ranging from the German repertoire of J.S. Bach and Froberger, through the Italian recording Frescobaldi and French, recording Louis Couperin, recording albums that 'won a wider audience for their music and set a standard of interpretative style. Tasteful ornamentation, subtle rubato nuances within a firm rhythmical pulse, and stylistic authority characterized his harpsichord playing.'¹⁴⁷ Leonhardt preferred performing and recording on properly restored or copies of period instruments that were associated with the correct period of the compositions.

¹⁴⁶ Salter, "Gustav Leonhardt Obituary."

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

Leonhardt was known for, and he himself noted that his playing was sometimes ‘too coolly dispassionate and austere a style’. The same Guardian article notes Leonhardt’s cool demeanour ‘His own playing was marked by superlative technical assurance, lucidity, intellectual authority and gravitas – gaiety and humour came less easily to him’ and this is something he acknowledged and he attempted a freer, more relaxed approach later in his career¹⁴⁸. The Guardian did note however that although held in high esteem, there was criticism that his ‘excessive sobriety - the wit of French clavecinists seemed to elude him – of rather unsettling free rubatos, and in concerted works of over-heavy accentuation’. It is unfortunate that there are not two recordings of Leonhardt performing the same preludes at different stages of his career, as it would have been of interest to note if his interpretation reflected his acknowledgement of his own early more sombre persona.

The list of people who worked or studied with Leonhardt is significant and reads of the ‘Who’s Who’ of early musicians of the following generation: Bob van Asperen, John Butt, Alan Curtis, Richard Egarr, Pierre Hantaï, Christopher Hogwood, Ton Koopman, Davitt Moroney, Christophe Rousset, Skip Sempé, and Colin Tilney.

Colin Tilney (B: London 31 October 1933)

Tilney is an English harpsichordist, who now resides in Canada. He studied harpsichord with Mary Potts from 1956-58, and then studied with Leonhardt in Amsterdam, although there is only five years’ age difference between these two gentlemen.

In 1979, Tilney moved to Toronto, where he taught at the Royal Conservatory of Music. Oxford Music notes, as with Leonhardt, Tilney’s propensity to perform music on the appropriate keyboard instrument, also using original scores.¹⁴⁹ Tilney also wrote the body of work that this research references ‘The Arts of the Unmeasured Prelude (London, 1991). His recording oeuvre includes English works of Purcell and Locke, Italian repertoire of Scarlatti and the early German composers such as Froberger and Kuhnau. Tilney is currently on the faculty at University of Victoria, School of Music in Toronto.

¹⁴⁸ Howard Schott, “Leonhardt, Gustav,” *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed 22 March 2014

http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/16435?q=gustav+leonhardt&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

¹⁴⁹ Howard Schott, “Tilney, Colin,” *Grove Music Online*, n.d., Oxford University Press, accessed 22 March 2014 http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/27969?q=tilney&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

Bob (Jan Gerard) van Asperen (B. Amsterdam 8 October 1947)

Dutch keyboardist and conductor, van Asperen's first noted teacher was Leonhardt, and he also studied organ with Albert de Klerk at the Amsterdam Conservatory, completing his studies in 1971. Van Asperen's recording repertoire includes the French clavecinistes, along with Soler and C.P.E Bach.

Van Asperen was on the faculty at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague as a harpsichord professor from 1973 to 88, after which he succeeded Leonhardt at the Sweelinck Conservatory in Amsterdam.¹⁵⁰

Christophe Rousset: (b Montfavet, nr Avignon, 12 April 1961)

Rousset, a harpsichordist and director, is the only French national of this group. He studied harpsichord at the Paris Schola Cantorum under Huguette Dreyfus in 1976, before commencing studies with Bob van Asperen in The Hague in 1983. He also studied interpretation with Gustav Leonhardt. Rousset divides his interest being performing and directing, and his playing style is said to show 'technical virtuosity, and a fastidious attention to stylistic detail which may also be discerned in the performances of Les Talens Lyriques.' Rousset's discography includes the complete harpsichord works of Rameau and the complete harpsichord pieces of François Couperin.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Howard Schott, "Asperen, Bob van," *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, n.d., accessed 22 March 2014.

http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/43297?q=van+asperen&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

¹⁵¹ Nicholas Anderson, "Rousset, Christophe," *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, n.d., Oxford University Press, accessed 22 March 2014 http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.virtual.anu.edu.au/subscriber/article/grove/music/43596?q=rousset&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit.

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